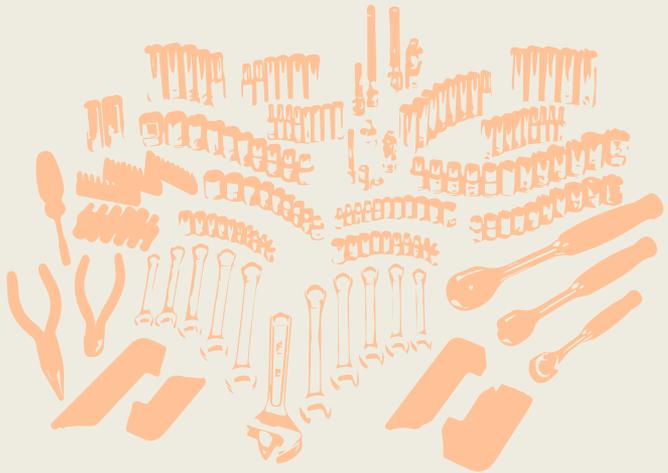


Equity in the Arts Toolkit

Produced by Kounkuey Design Initiative for the 2019 CAL-Now Convening



2019

Equity in the Arts Toolkit

A project of Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) and Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI) with support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

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INTRODUCTION

The California Arts Leadership Now (CAL-Now) 2019 Annual Convening of seven arts leader entities supported by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation gathered in mid-May in the Eastern Coachella Valley (ECV). The goal of the convening was to exchange ideas on community engagement and community-based art programming, and to build a network connecting CAL-Now members with the art leaders of this historically underserved region. Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) partnered with Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI), a design and community development nonprofit based in the ECV, to design the two day program, lead field visits to local sites where KDI is working, and assist with connecting the attendees with local artists, who would communicate firsthand the challenges and opportunities they face as practitioners. KDI has been working in partnership with community members from the ECV since 2013 which has fostered deep rooted relationships in all communities in the area. KDI's commitment to working with local artists in the organization's built work and community development was the bridge used by the CAL-Now attendees and the ECV's local artists to connect and start creating a network that will be of benefit to all sides.

The convening took place over two days on Saturday, May 18 and Sunday, May 19.

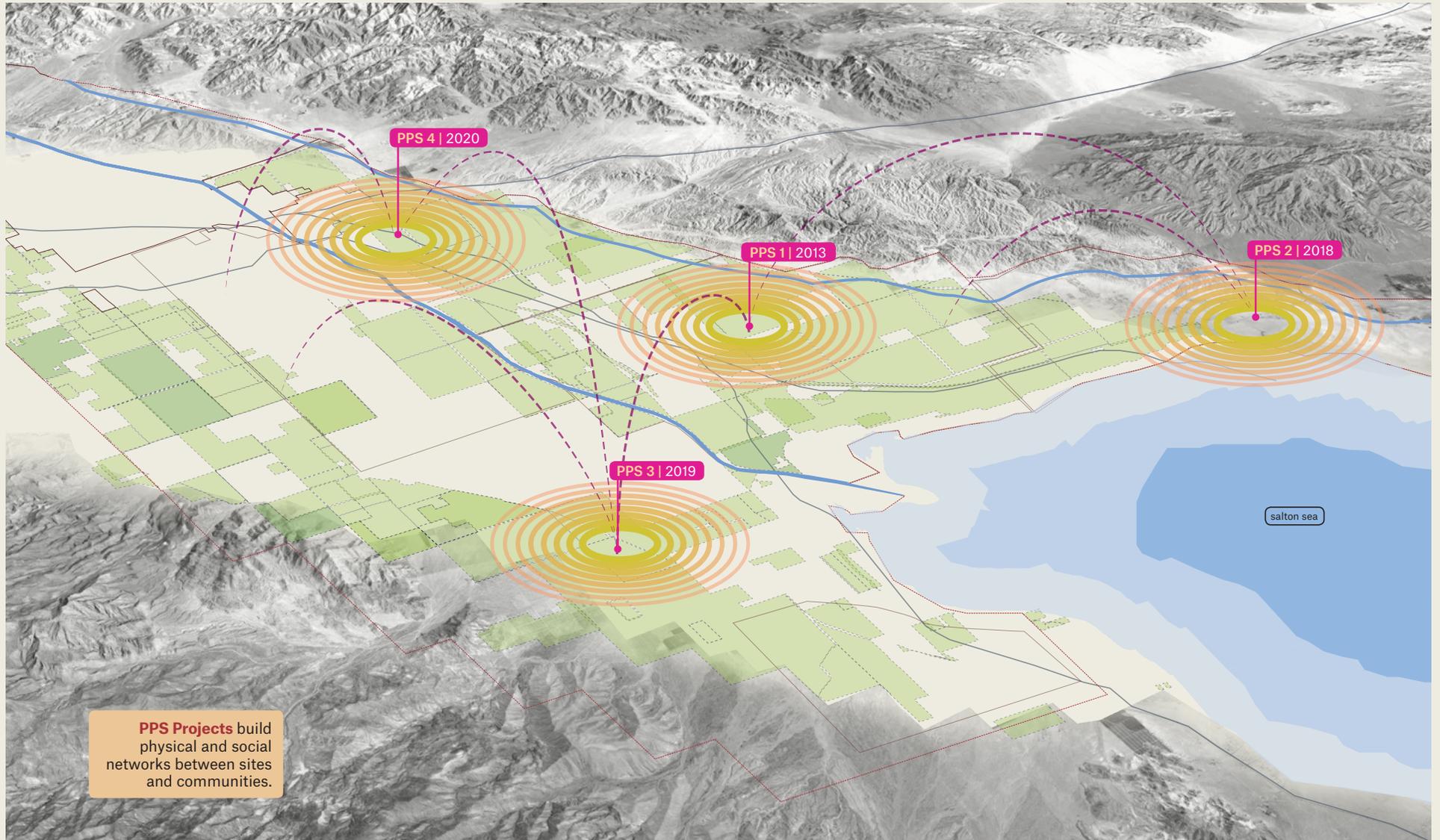


THE ECV

The Eastern Coachella Valley (ECV) is defined by locals and advocates as a geographic region that includes the cities of Indio and Coachella as well as the unincorporated communities of Thermal, Oasis, Mecca, and North Shore to their southeast. The more highly populated tourist area of the Western Coachella Valley, which includes cities like Palm Springs, has experienced steady economic development and has largely been able to provide the infrastructure required to adequately serve its residents and visitors. However, the ECV, though close in proximity and interconnected economically with the Western Valley, has not experienced the same level of development.

The demographic profile of the ECV differs in many ways from that of the Western Coachella Valley and Riverside County as a whole. The populations of Thermal, Oasis, Mecca, and North Shore are each over 98% Latino, with many monolingual Spanish speakers. Despite the agricultural prosperity of the area, poverty is widespread. As of 2017, the median household income was \$27,455 for Thermal, \$22,817 for Oasis, \$28,417 for North Shore, and \$25,863 for Mecca which, at less than 80% of California's statewide median, distinguishes all four communities as Disadvantaged Communities.

Additional indicators reveal that residents within the Coachella Valley are subject to disproportionate health impacts due to prevalent environmental justice issues. Rates of diabetes, asthma, and obesity are all higher than the California average. KDI's involvement in the area is part of a social and political awakening from these communities that have identified the need for municipal services, infrastructure development, and services like recreation, housing, and reliable transportation. Despite the desperate need for basic services within these communities, there is nonetheless a thriving community with a vibrant culture of diversity and art.







SATURDAY, MAY 18

On Saturday the CAL-Now attendees went on a tour of the ECV, visiting two of KDI's designed Productive Public Spaces (PPS) and the Salton Sea. The first stop was in the community of North Shore, on the shoreline of the Salton Sea. KDI shared information on their involvement in an environmental justice campaign working with a group of youth who are interested in learning more about the health impact that the drying lake will have in their community. CAL-Now learned about the advocacy efforts already happening where KDI and other local organization partners have met several times with the state and are working to influence the state's lacking community engagement around the short and long term proposed solutions for this potential environmental disaster.

The second stop was two miles inward to the North Shore community where the attendees experienced the newly built community-designed park called Nuestro Lugar – one of KDI's PPS in the region. The attendees learned from KDI about the community's desire to design the park around the narrative of Sea to Sky, representative of the striking landscape and thriving agricultural community located here. Art elements are embedded throughout the design of the PPS including an alphabet of glyphs designed by the community and a mural by local artist Carlos Ramirez. These elements serve as clear examples of community-led design work that were incorporated into the realization of the park through an in-depth participatory design process.

The third and last stop was in the community of Oasis. This site, another future PPS project similar to the North Shore park, at the time of the visit had recently finished the design phase and had not yet been built. During this visit, KDI emphasized the participatory process and gave further detail about KDI's PPS process from the youth-led research tactics and the design of the "beacon" (a mobile research station), to participatory budgeting, and the creation of programs that combat issues identified by the community and activate the site.

Meals were provided by Delicias Laguna Azul, a food collective made up of six women from the community of North Shore that KDI assisted in their formation during the program phase of the project and were key participants in the design of the North Shore Park.







SUNDAY, MAY 19

On Sunday, CAL-Now convened at the Raices Cultura building in downtown Coachella. Raices is a local art-driven nonprofit that creates arts programming for local emerging young artists. At this gathering, the attendees heard from four artists at different stages in their careers, working in different disciplines and producing work in the ECV. Presentations were followed by a Q+A to give attendees and artists the opportunity to identify intersections and potential future collaborations. The artists that presented were Carlos Ramirez, Conchita Pozar, Bryan Mendez, and Venessa Becerra. The artists were asked to prepare a presentation about their medium and how they had collaborated with KDI in the past, as well as to identify needs that they and others like themselves face while working in rural communities such as the ECV.

After lunch on day two, KDI facilitated a round table conversation for CAL-Now members, alongside the local artists, to think about best practices when creating art works, programs, and grants in underserved communities similar to the ECV. KDI presented a series of questions to prompt conversation and the attendees broke out into four groups for discussion. Every group had one of the artists available for conversation and to share mutual and individual learnings. The report back from each group was collected by the KDI staff to produce a comprehensive toolkit based on the agreed approach from the at-large group.

The following are the two questions that were asked by KDI that each group had to address:

How is your art being influenced by your community?

How do you ensure the just representation of communities where your art is located?

Modifications to the questions were made by each group so that the questions could be more inclusive to administrative roles in grants and program writing.





EQUITY IN THE ARTS TOOLKIT

The Equity in the Arts Toolkit is a product of the collaboration that took place between the CAL-Now convening attendees and the local participating ECV artists. To recap, the participants were asked to break out into four groups and produce a list of values they would like to consider as they are designing grants, programs, or art works to ensure the just representation of the communities they work in.

There were four overarching values that were identified throughout the process and these have informed the toolkit's proposed road map.

The four identified values are:

EQUITABLE COLLABORATION



COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION



COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT



LASTING IMPACT



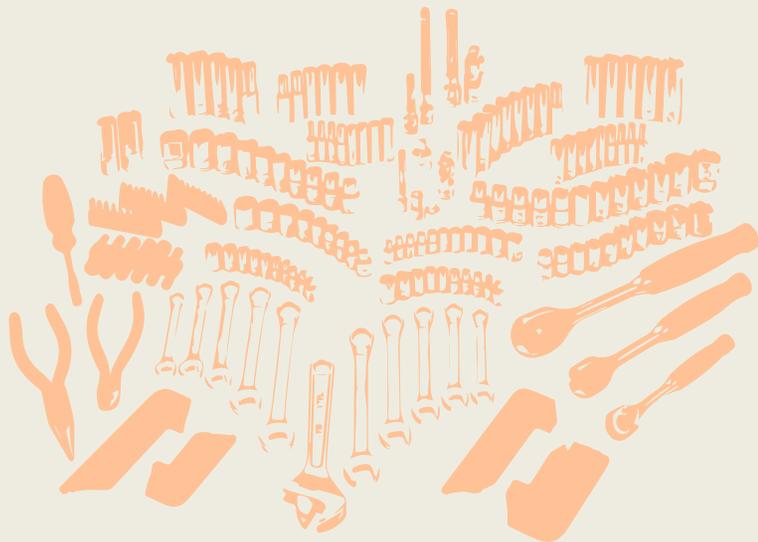


The Date Farmers (Armando Lerma and Carlos Ramirez), \$2 Million, 2015



HOW TO USE THE TOOLKIT

The toolkit is meant to be used in two phases of any grant, program or art work, first as a reference in the project planning and design phase (Stages one and two), and then as a checklist prior to implementation (Stages three and four).



There are four stages that the toolkit will walk the reader through that collectively target the four identified values mentioned previously.

VISION

The toolkit's first stage walks the practitioner through a series of questions to ask themselves as they are embarking on the creation of a new project. These questions are meant to help the reader start from a position of equitable collaboration.



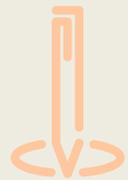
RESEARCH

The second stage of the toolkit is about looking, listening, and learning. This stage is important for one to get to know the community intimately. This is helpful for the practitioner to contextualize their project and ensure that the design will have community representation as its main priority.



DESIGN

The third stage of the toolkit involves the design of the project. The practitioner is instructed to take all of the information that they have gathered from stages one and two and use it to inform the design of the project, always with the empowerment of the community at the forefront of their mind.



LASTING IMPACT

During the last stage of the toolkit, which is the implementation of the project, the practitioner is instructed to use the checklist provided to measure the long term investment as well as the impact their project is making.



NARRATIVE BUILDING

During the workshop discussed earlier, the CAL-Now convening attendees identified that the high art world needs to be inclusive of community input, feedback, and collaboration. It is our recommendation that arts grant-makers and arts programming entities be more explicit about engaging underserved communities with these goals in mind. It is important to allow the beneficiary community to self-communicate their own narrative. This should be the guiding factor of the impact that conscientious arts practitioners wish to create. It is the communities that should decide the way their community is represented and viewed by the outside world. This same community should decide what works for them and what is needed for lasting positive impact where they live and work. As a practitioner, you should allow yourself the time to think about the approach in a way that centers the communities and does not direct and/or influence the process to please a previously established agenda, unless that agenda is community-led design!

NARRATIVE BUILDING
(DESIGN + PLANNING)

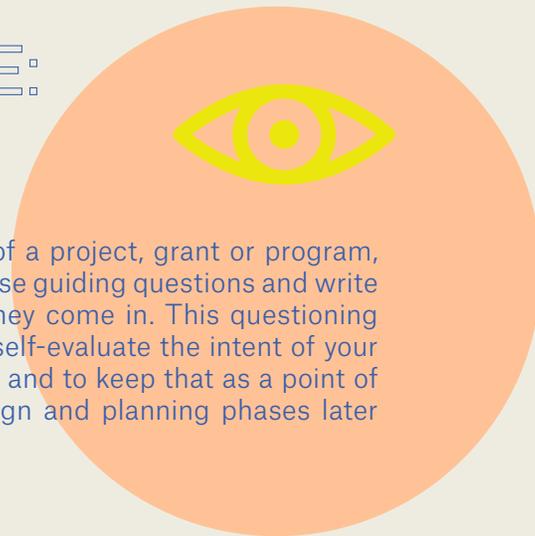
- **VISION**
- **RESEARCH**

DESIGN + BUILD
(PRE-IMPLEMENTATION)

- **DESIGN**
- **EVALUATE IMPACT**

STAGE ONE: VISION

When you are dreaming of a project, grant or program, you should go through these guiding questions and write down your thoughts as they come in. This questioning is a great opportunity to self-evaluate the intent of your proposed project or work, and to keep that as a point of reference during the design and planning phases later on.

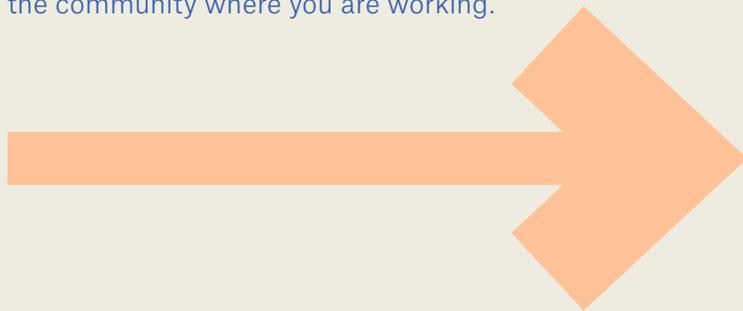


GUIDING QUESTION	THINGS TO CONSIDER	THINGS THAT COME TO MIND
<p>WHAT IS THE PROJECT AND WHO IS IT FOR?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the project formulated in coordination with community representatives? Will this project be embraced by the community? What demographics might not be able to access this project? And why? 	
<p>WHAT IS THE IMPACT THAT THIS PROJECT INTENDS TO HAVE?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How will this project be of benefit to the community? What are the potential adverse effects that the project could have within the community? 	
<p>WHAT IS THE GOAL AND WHY?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does success look like? Who defines what success is? 	



STAGE TWO: RESEARCH

Stage 2 urges you to 'Look, Listen, and Learn' about the community, yourself, and the different strengths and assets coming together at the table. You might want to consider becoming a passive player and observing the ecology of the socio-political, racial, and linguistic context you will be working in. You should attend local events and community gatherings whenever possible to put shape to the needs and wants of the community. You should also consider giving yourself ample time and space to understand the context and learn how to best represent the experience of the community you will be working in. Doing this allows yourself the space needed to assess if what you're thinking is the right approach for this particular context. You should remember that the goal is to transition from passive observer to explicit partner in order to develop the project/grant/artwork into a meaningful and impactful project to the community where you are working.



LOOK *WHO IS THE COMMUNITY?*

- Is there infrastructure in place that allows for the arts to thrive or should this project help create such infrastructure?
- Identify the stakeholders, especially those who are the target audience for the work

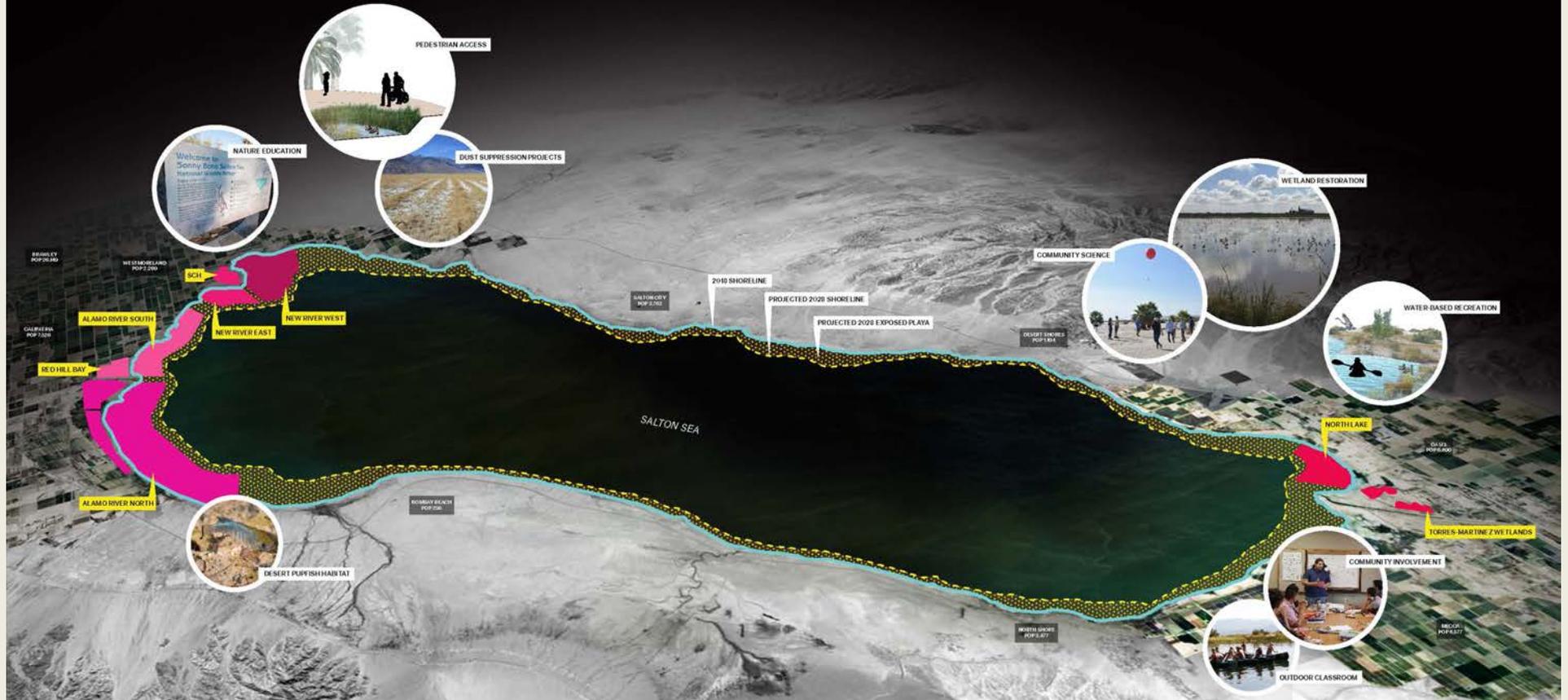
LISTEN *MEET THE PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE*

- Engage the stakeholders and ask them questions
- Is the community open to creating long lasting partnerships that could outlive the funding of this particular project?
- What are the main concerns and needs in the targeted community?

LEARN *GET TO KNOW THE COMMUNITY INTIMATELY*

- What are the assets and expertise that the community can offer?
- Are there organized groups of people already in the community that you can tap into?
- Create a Power Map
- Who are the local decision makers, influencers, and political players?
- Are there conversations that require follow up?
- Will the project create a space for the art world and the community to be in equal exchange in terms of dialogue?
- Connect with residents and conduct follow up conversations. (This process can take a long time so be patient and use known networks that would make connecting with residents more accessible.)

The Salton Sea is shrinking. The State of California is obligated to build projects that suppress dust and create habitat. By layering on community amenities, multi-beneficial infrastructure can be created to serve the residents and wildlife, creating a sustainable and resilient Salton Sea.





STAGE THREE: DESIGN



Take some time to be a passive player in your project design. Define who you are as well as the community and the people you will be working with. Before any project, creative or non-creative, it is important to understand the socioeconomic, racial, and political landscape that impacts the people’s lived experiences where you are working and also impacts the effectiveness of your work. Consider the following guiding questions to help you map out these landscapes. Let these answers dictate the needs your project is addressing and have these answers inform your design.



GUIDING QUESTION	THINGS TO CONSIDER	THINGS THAT COME TO MIND
WHO ARE YOU?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your power and privilege and how do you relate to the community where the project will be located? • What are your motivations for engaging in this work? Are your motivations justly represented by the objective of the project? • What are your assets and your strengths and how can they highlight the assets and strengths of others? 	
WHO IS THE COMMUNITY?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your geographic region or community? Will your work be located there or somewhere else? • Who can help you define this community? • What is the socio-political, racial, and linguistic context? • Does the current infrastructure allow for the arts to thrive? • Who are the different constituents in the community that should be involved? 	
WHO WILL BENEFIT FROM THIS PROJECT?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who will have the biggest takeaways? Is the community economically disadvantaged? Will your project build on equity? • Is the project reflective of the community’s culture and values? 	



STAGE FOUR: EVALUATE IMPACT



Once your project or grant is designed, use the following checklist to evaluate the impact you intend to create. Tally up the value of each selected box, the minimum target goal is to reach above a 75%. This stage should give you the opportunity to revisit stage three if you have not reached your minimum target percentage.



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS (30%)

- There is a group of interested community members that will allow for the project to thrive and be embraced by the community (10%)
- Through the research phase you have identified a group of community leaders that will help roll out the project to the community at large (10%)
- You have established enough ties within the community to facilitate future outreach and engagement efforts (10%)

ACCESSIBILITY (20%)

- It's accessible to all economic demographics (5%)
- It's accessible to people with and without disabilities (5%)
- It is accessible to all persons within the community of different languages and cultures (5%)
- It is accessible through most mediums of transportation (5%)

SUSTAINABILITY (25%)

- There is a plan or a path forward that will outlive the grant opportunity or project timeline (15%)
- The community will be given the opportunity and/or capacity training to continue promoting the arts as an empowered group (10%)

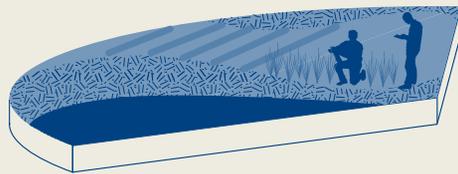
TRANSFERABILITY (25%)

- The infrastructure needed for the arts to thrive is either already in place, or, by the time the project is completed, the infrastructure will be established and able to be built upon (15%)
- The community is empowered and has the resources to pursue long term self-sustainability of the project (10%)

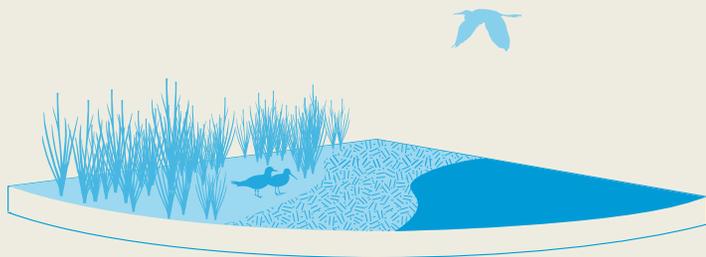
FINAL SCORE _____



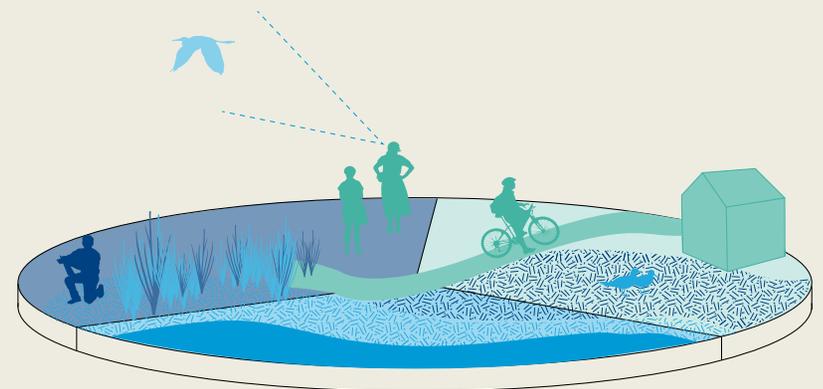
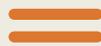
COMMUNITY



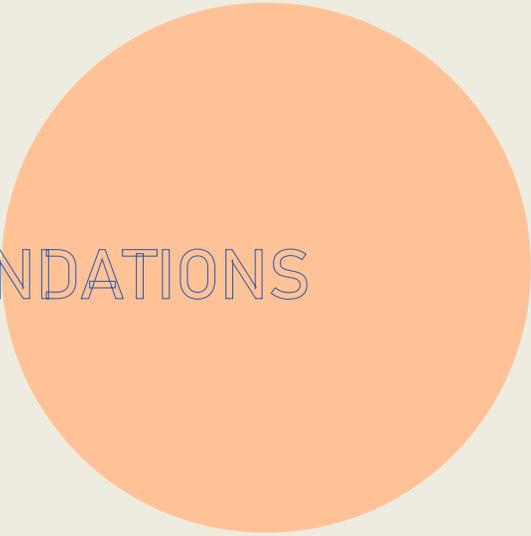
INFRASTRUCTURE



ECOLOGY



RESILIENCY FOR THE SALTON SEA



FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

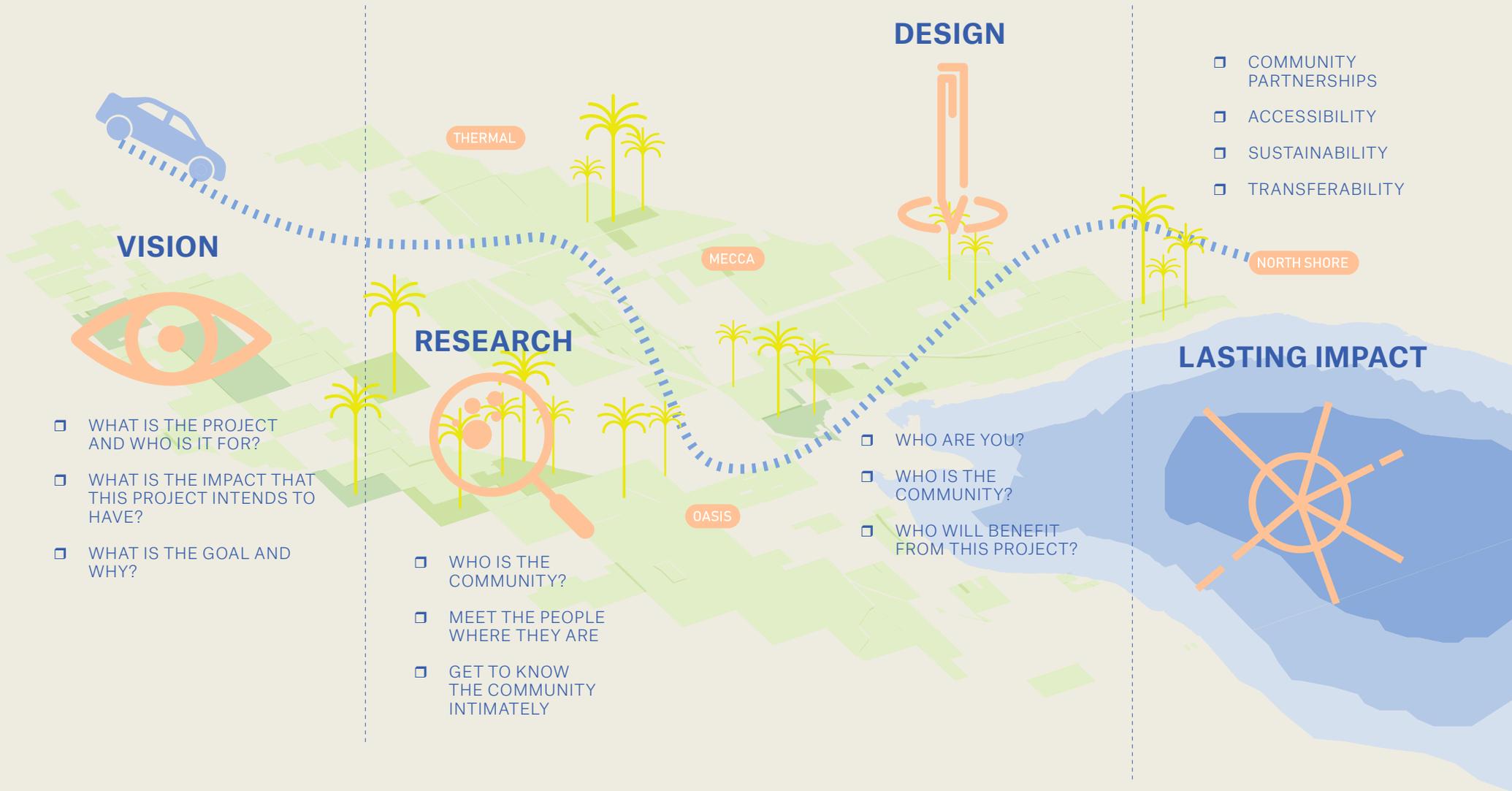
This toolkit intends to positively impact your work through a social equity lens. Please use this guide with flexibility and think critically through each step. Remember that all communities are not created the same, adjustments and contextualizing will be required. The questions in the beginning are there to help you make adjustments as needed. We recommend that you also think about the institutional hurdles that you can encounter in your organization or department when trying to implement some of these tactics in the creation and implementation of your project. Identifying the need for institutional change should not be a deterrent from your desire to have the four identifies values embedded in your work:



EQUITABLE COLLABORATION
COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION
COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT
LASTING IMPACT

Our hope is that with this toolkit the communities you wish to impact are more holistically included and that this is also a conversation starter for your organization or department on equitable inclusivity. Consider what policies and processes are in place that would better allow for a more inclusive and equitable approach both from you as an individual but also with support from your institution.

GUIDING OUTLINE





CAL-Now Convening representatives from Center for Cultural Innovation, Emerging Arts Leaders/Los Angeles, Emerging Arts Professionals, San Francisco/Bay Area, genARTS Silicon Valley, Multicultural Arts Leadership Institute - San José, Public Matters - Los Angeles, Rising Arts Leaders San Diego, and William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

