

the **Steel Yard** : *Building Stronger Community Networks Through Public Art*

1. Determine organizational strengths:
 - What are we good at? How can our existing programs be rethought?
 - What are our assets? Who are key staff and community members?
 - What is our capacity? Where do our programs take place? Where could they?
 - What is our potential for growth without compromising our values, mission, and programmatic quality?
2. Identify community needs:
 - What are the most pressing community concerns? Who is in need of help within our community?
 - Is there anything we programmatically do that already considers or helps alleviate one or more of the community concerns? If so, is there potential to grow? If not, is there anything we can develop that is also relevant and within mission?
3. Design a program to combine organizational strength with community needs:
 - Identify program goals.
 - Build sample programs and budgets to figure out the ideal scale and scope.
 - Develop a pilot opportunity with trusted partner organizations and funders.
 - Carefully track the first project to
4. Find and build partners and funding sources:
 - Build strong client relationships (local CDC's, nonprofit and for-profit developers, neighborhood and business associations etc.) Use small projects to get started and identify client needs. The quality of your work is always the bottom line for program partners along with price.
 - Leverage fabrication contracts to extend grant support for training programs and offer additional course time/stipends to trainees. Try to avoid using grant support to subsidize fabrication projects.
 - Persuade local funders to invest in job training programs, go and tell them about community needs, ask if they are in a position to help.
 - Partner with local social service organizations to refer applicants and assist them meeting program requirements and deadlines.
 - Select projects within communities of participants served: they become agents of change by transforming their own communities.

5. Program quality and expectations:

- Develop adequate job training program curriculums. Listen to teachers and participants to learn what lesson plans are the most successful.
- Be responsive to participant learning needs: through end of day group reflections and surveys.
- Select challenging but achievable public projects. This varies greatly based on course hours, number of students and availability of projects.
- Hone fabrication and industry skills: work with local contractors and fence companies to update participant, instructor and organizational skill sets.

6. Training:

What do students get out of the program?

- Build job readiness skills:
 - i. Select participants through an application and interview process based on interest, professionalism and expressed need.
 - ii. Cover general and job specific etiquette and employee expectations.
 - iii. Prepare participants for work after the program, including tours to local fabrication shops with possible employers.
- Offer a self-generated certificate for program completion that details the skills gained through the course.
- Train participants in safety and basic metalworking skills through personal projects and public projects.
- Emphasize and recognize the paid & portfolio-building opportunity for participants and work with them as professionals.

7. Final public project expectations:

- Expect a high standard of quality: design, fabrication & finishing.
- Make sure that program instructors are on schedule and aware of all project details.
- Allow instructors to pace the project in a way that reflects the student's abilities but also expresses the professional expectations.
- Offer positions for the students to participate in project installation.
- Create opportunities for the client and funders to meet with participants.

8. Documentation, sharing of stories

- Document through photographs, video, surveys, post-program reviews.
- Share the story with funders, clients, tour sites, instructors, staff, and community.