



FLEX: COLLABORATION

Festivals Learning Exchange Program



TOOLKIT: COLLABORATION WITH PEERS



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ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT: COLLABORATION WITH PEERS

WorkInCulture's [Festivals Learning Exchange \(FLEX\)](#) Toolkit of learning content and resources will help you learn the basics of creating and implementing a collaboration for your festival or organization.

In this toolkit you will explore collaboration concepts and techniques, and resources developed and collected during the FLEX Program so that you can examine what you – and your collaborators – need to start, maintain and end fruitful professional relationships as peers.



The following content was developed and curated by Fanny Martin of Art of Festivals, a not-for-profit strategic production agency that partners with artists, institutions and communities to bring more art into everyday life and more life into the arts sector. The original content was developed and delivered as part of a pilot program held between January – May 2022 for arts and heritage festival organizations located in Toronto, Kingston, Ottawa, and Sudbury.



Meet our Curriculum Consultant and Facilitator: Fanny Martin



Fanny is an international creative producer & facilitator specialised in festivals, networks, interdisciplinary projects and art in public space. Born and educated in France, she developed an eclectic freelance project portfolio in the UK before moving to Canada and founding [Art of Festivals](#), a creative company that designs transformative events to spark change and enchant everyday life. In collaboration with artists, educators, researchers, technologists and activists, her work focuses on producing memorable shared experiences, shaping change strategies, experimenting with participatory frameworks and designing learning & evaluation programmes.

KEY CONCEPTS



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THINKING ABOUT COLLABORATION:

Collaborating in the arts is a common occurrence and plays a role in organizations' ability to maximize resources, work together rather than in competition with each other, and plan for the long-term.

Effective collaboration among peers is crucial for building long-lasting, trust-based relationships and must include honesty, transparency, feedback, respect of boundaries, and recognition of the work being done. This extends to working with peers at every level – within a team, organization, or as part of a larger partnership or network.

"In a dialogue (...) nobody is trying to win. Everybody wins if anybody wins. There is a different sort of spirit to it. In a dialogue, there is no attempt to gain points, or to make your particular view prevail. Rather, whenever any mistake is discovered on the part of anybody, everybody gains. It's a situation called win-win, whereas the other game is win-lose – if I win, you lose. But a dialogue is something more of a common participation, in which we are not playing a game against each other, but with each other. In a dialogue, everybody wins."
–David Bohm, *On Dialogue* (1990)



COLLABORATION VS. COMPETITION

"We can either perpetuate a society based on competition, where some win and some lose, or we can work toward a society based on cooperation, where winning and losing become irrelevant."
–Anne Bishop, *Becoming an Ally* (1994)

A few propositions here:

- competition as a pattern of oppression – because it repeats itself, there is a positive reinforcement loop.
- oppression – can also be thought of as an “un-negotiated power imbalance.”
- If we want to break this pattern of oppression, we need to have something to replace it.

At the very root of this concerted negotiation of power, there is dialogue, as an exchange through which all involved parties are transformed. It's not about imposing MY truth or replicating someone else's worldview. It's about co-creating truth, co-producing a new vision where community members can belong, can be amongst friends, can take responsibility for themselves and others, can care and be cared for.



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COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Creating a community of practice allows a group of people with a common interest, passion, concern, or goals to share and learn through a series of interactions, guided by an agreed upon format. A community of practice allows for sharing of knowledge and best practices and creating new knowledge to advance the work of those involved. Interactions – be they through virtual/in-person meetings, message boards, group discussion forums, etc. – are often held on an ongoing basis to address the purpose and needs of the participants and network served.

*“Community... is about the experience of **belonging**. We are in community each time we find a place where we belong. **To belong is to be related to and a part of something.** To belong is to know, even in the middle of the night, that I am among friends. The second meaning of the word belong has to do with **being an owner. To belong to a community is to act as a creator and co-owner of that community.** What I consider mine I will build and nurture.*

The work, then, is to seek in our communities a wider and deeper sense of emotional ownership; it means fostering among all of a community’s citizens a sense of ownership and accountability.”

—Peter Block, Community: The Structure of Belonging (edited)



COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

A community agreement is a shared agreement formed by a group at the beginning of a process. These commitments can help to create a safe(r) space, they can be referred to if conflicts arise, and they can help set the tone and focus for your time together. A community agreement is an opportunity for a group to create a container that meets the needs of everyone in that group. The process of community agreement building invites peers to ask for what they need to learn and create as openly and securely as possible together. Community agreements can be referred to and adapted at any point of a process.

Consider the following when collaborating with peers:

- What do you need to feel welcome and respected in this space?
- What are some ways you’ve addressed conflict in unhealthy ways?
- What are some ways you’ve experienced to address conflict in healthy ways?
- How did it feel in your body? Is there an action that represents it?
- What does success look like for you? How will you know you’ve achieved it?
- What are some signs that the group has succeeded in achieving their goals?
- When did a community agreement work very well for you?
- When would it have been useful to mediate conflict?



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EXERCISES

COLLABORATING WITH PEERS → WHO, WHY, HOW?

Collaborative exercises to play with, twist and rewrite for your needs.

The aim of these questions—those suggested below and the ones you make up with and for your own team—is to support deep-dive discussions into peer collaborations. There may be a point that catches your attention, a couple of good questions you can combine, a logical link you can rename in a better way: they’re yours to mix up, truncate, augment, try out solo or together. It’s an invitation to structure your team discussions, invent new meeting rules, research and create your own ways of working well.

The questions are structured under three angles:

Angle	Question	Activity	Action	Sense
1. WHO	What’s the general picture?	Mapping	Observing	Seeing
2. WHY	What are your priorities?	Strategy	Processing	Listening
3. HOW	What is generative rather than extractive / competitive?	Tactics	Doing	Touching

What do you notice in your discussions with peers?

- What patterns are emerging?
- Why did some relationships lapse or collapse?
 - Are they worth revisiting? Better left dormant. Why and how?
- What causes resistance and avoidance?
- What enables flow and abundance?



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1 - WHO: PEER MAPPING

STEP 1 - LIST: name and describe all the peer networks you belong to, should belong to, shouldn't belong to and used to belong to.

- If working as a group: discuss your individual choices, including the ones that you hesitated with or thought of but didn't make it to your final list.
- What categories can you organize these networks into? (e.g. fee-based membership, communities of practice such as other theatre practitioners or music presenters, advocacy groups...).
- What is your position / role / notoriety within each of these networks?



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STEP 2 - DRAW: your peer networks in relation to your core mission

Using the template provided below or another visual / conceptual support of your choice:

- Identify 4-6 peer networks that your festival belongs or should belong to: all the good ones, and the not-that-bad, could-be-better and used-to-be-good ones.
- In relation to your core mission:
 - What is the respective weight / size / importance of these networks?
 - How close / far are they from your core mission?
 - At which scale (local, national, international) do they make more sense?

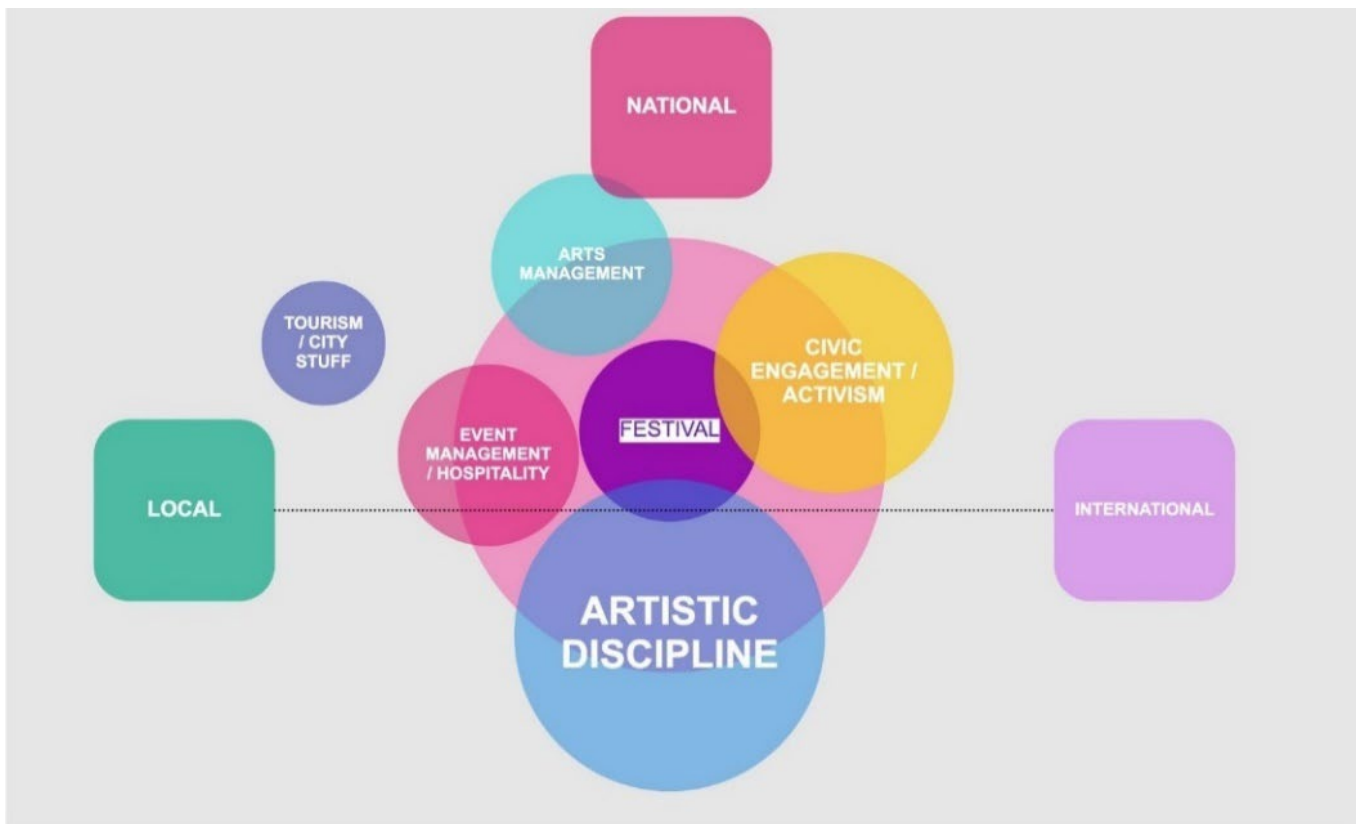


Fig. 1: peer network mapping example

Template: fig. 1 / [link to Miro board to duplicate](#) (Note: Free sign up required to duplicate the template; generic festival example provided for illustration purposes)



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2. WHY: PEER STRATEGIES

STEP 1 - ASSESS the value of your relationships.

Looking back at your collaborative strategic project, how can your peer networks support you in your strategic goals?

- What can each network do for you?
- What can you do for each network?
- Are there synergies between some of these peer networks that you could play a role in activating or enhancing?



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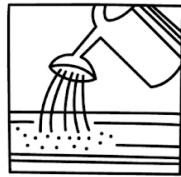
STEP 2 - ASSERT your vested interests in your priority networks.

With an abundance model in mind and guided by the principle of showing up with good energy:

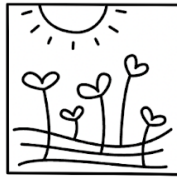
- What feedback and critical insights can you provide to the networks you belong to?
- Which means of communication are available to you to exchange information and be more visible in each network?
- What can you do to improve the networks you are part of?



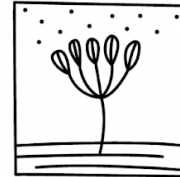
curiosity



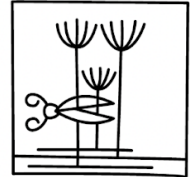
exploration



navigation

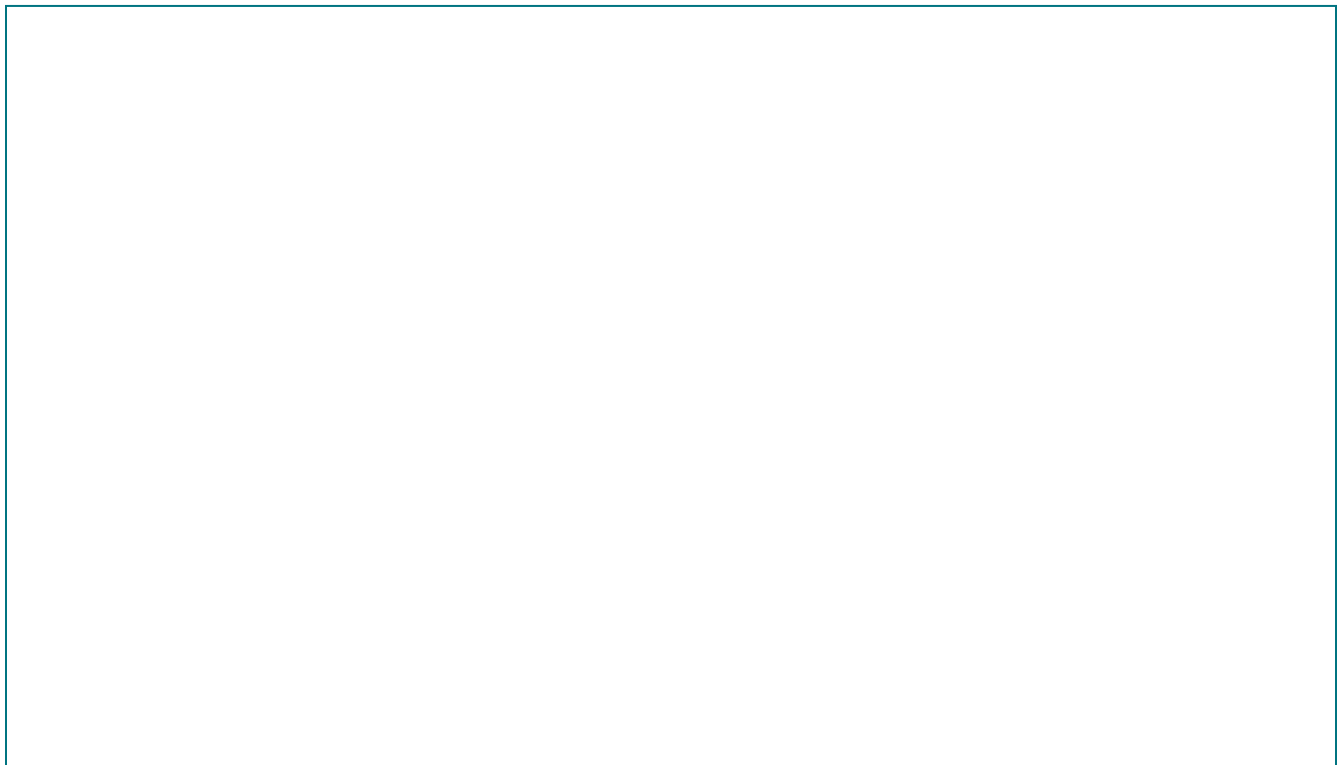


transformation



emergence

Fig. 2: emergence pattern icons (<https://www.stateofemergence.art/>)



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3 - HOW: PEER TACTICS

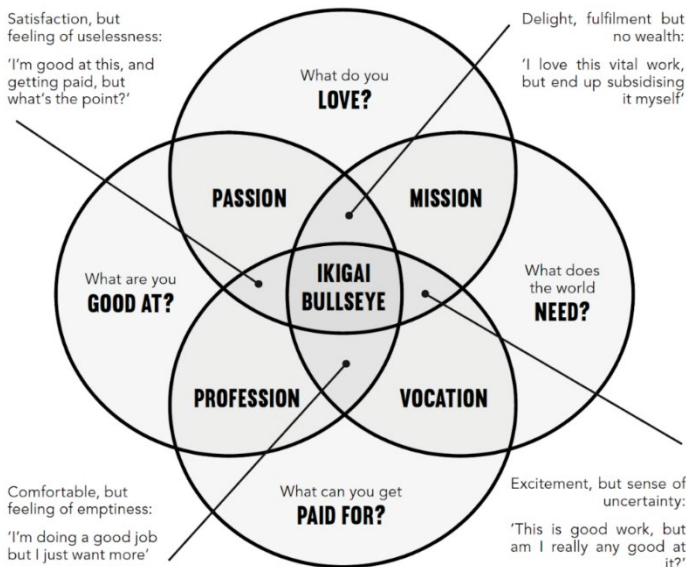
STEP 1 - LISTEN UP to the different voices in your peer networks

- How can you gain reliable insider information to better understand the inner logics and politics of your priority networks?
- Who are the current leaders? The historical dissidents? What does the governance structure say about the politics and vitality of the network?



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STEP 2 – SPEAK UP to seize opportunities that benefit you and others.



- Which opportunities to step up in leadership, visibility and attractivity offer each of your priority networks? (Committees, volunteering, publications...)
- How can you assess and enhance the balance between giving and receiving from the networks you invest time and energy into?

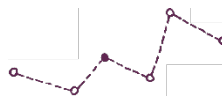
Fig. 3: Ikigai diagram from [Tactics for the Tightrope, Mark Robinson \(2021\)](#)



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PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Continue your learning and application of these collaborative concepts and processes by watching the following **FLEX interviews**. Also make sure to check out our [FLEX Spotlight Sessions](#), featuring a number of international case studies contextualized for the Canadian sector, and accompanying resources on our website: <https://www.workinculture.ca/flex>



FLEX COFFEE BREAK SERIES

Also available on [WorkInCulture's YouTube Channel](#), this series features insights from past participants of WorkInCulture's FLeX (Festivals Learning Exchange) Program on the overarching topic of collaboration. Learn from 4 festival leaders located in Kingston, Sudbury, and Toronto about how they approach collaborating with Peers, Artists, and Society.

To complement the key concepts and exercises above, watch these following clips featuring Liam Karry of the [Kick & Push Festival](#) in Kingston (*in English*), and Patrick Breton of [Centre franco-ontarien de folklore](#) (*en français*) on how to collaborate more effectively with peers.



[A conversation with Liam Karry](#) of [Kick & Push Festival](#) in Kingston.



[Une conversation avec Patrick Breton](#) du [Centre franco-ontarien de folklore](#) de Sudbury, sur comment mieux collaborer avec ses pairs.



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