

Practical tools for

Creative Climate Action

In Art We Trust – Collaboration Checklist



60-90 min



1-4 participants

Tool description and purpose

A practical tool for meaningful partnerships between artists and public authorities
This checklist-based tool supports fair, respectful, and effective collaboration between public authorities, intermediaries, and artists working on impactful projects. It is rooted in the recognition that art and culture offer unique ways of addressing complex challenges—and that this potential can only be realized if artistic freedom and cultural logic are preserved.

When to use?

- Planning to commission artists or creative professionals for projects with societal impact.
- Designing collaborative models between the public sector and cultural actors.
- Building partnerships that require clarity around roles, expectations, and creative autonomy.
- Supporting mutual understanding in cross-sector cooperation (e.g., green transition, social inclusion, democracy).

How to use?

- Use the checklist during the planning and onboarding phases of a project.
- Review the list jointly with artists or intermediaries at the beginning of collaboration.
- Refer back to the checklist if tensions or misunderstandings arise later.
- Use it as a contract briefing tool, discussion opener, or reflection guide.

Benefits of using this tool

- Clarifies expectations on both sides before a project begins.
- Builds trust by emphasizing shared principles.
- Helps funders avoid over-instrumentalizing art.
- Empowers artists to protect their role and rights.
- Enables sustainable and transformative collaboration.



1. Respect Artistic Freedom as a Core Principle

- Do not over-instrumentalize art for policy goals. Art's power lies in its independence, ambiguity, and freedom to provoke, not in predictable outcomes.
- Avoid over-defining success through narrow KPIs or expected messages. Transformation happens in unexpected ways.



2. Acknowledge the Unique Logic of Culture

- Culture is a commons - not an industry. Do not treat it like a service delivery model or commercial tool.
- Artistic processes are often non-linear, emotional, and experimental — that is their strength, not a weakness.



3. Involve Artists Early and Authentically

- Bring artists into the early planning stages of the project. Let them help shape the goals and formats.
- Let them be a co-thinker, a critic, a mirror, or even a wild card.



4. Create Space for the Unexpected

- Allow for failure, experimentation, and critique - even of the institutions funding the work.
- Embrace the unexpected - be prepared to look beyond your expectations and notions.
- Trust the process. Impact in art can be fast and explosive but also slow-burning and subtle.



5. Protect Copyright and Intellectual Ownership

- Ensure artists retain rights over their work and are given proper credit, even in publicly funded projects.
- Involve the creatives in drafting contracts and agreements. Understanding is crucial, as is the law. Consult with the legal department before signing.
- Avoid clauses that commodify or restrict artistic expression post-project.



6. Pay Artists Fairly and Transparently

- Compensate not just the product (a mural, a show, a workshop) but the time, thinking, and relational labor involved.
- Include budgets for research, community engagement, and the invisible parts of the process.



7. Recognize Art's Meta-Level Power

- Art is not just communication — it is a space for meaning-making, empathy, and uncertainty.
- Do not overload it with assignments. Let it ask the hard questions and dwell in complexity.

Fill-in Checklist

Collaboration Checklist For Authorities

☐

1. Respect Artistic Freedom as a Core Principle

- Do not over instrumentalize art for policy goals. Art's power lies in its independence, ambiguity, and freedom to provoke, not in predictable outcomes.
- Avoid over-defining success through narrow KPIs or expected messages. Transformation happens in unexpected ways.

☐

2. Acknowledge the Unique Logic of Culture

- Culture is a commons - not an industry. Do not treat it like a service delivery model or commercial tool.
- Artistic processes are often non-linear, emotional, and experimental — that is their strength, not a weakness.

☐

3. Involve Artists Early and Authentically

- Bring artists into the early planning stages of the project. Let them help shape the goals and formats.
- Let them be a co-thinker, a critic, a mirror, or even a wild card.

☐

4. Create Space for the Unexpected

- Allow for failure, experimentation, and critique - even of the institutions funding the work.
- Embrace the unexpected - be prepared to look beyond your expectations and notions.
- Trust the process. Impact in art can be fast and explosive but also slow-burning and subtle.

☐

5. Protect Copyright and Intellectual Ownership

- Ensure artists retain rights over their work and are given proper credit, even in publicly funded projects.
- Involve the creatives in drafting contracts and agreements. Understanding is crucial, as is the law. Consult with the legal department before signing.
- Avoid clauses that commodify or restrict artistic expression post-project.

☐

6. Pay Artists Fairly and Transparently

- Compensate not just the product (a mural, a show, a workshop) but the time, thinking, and relational labor involved.
- Include budgets for research, community engagement, and the invisible parts of the process.

☐

7. Recognize Art's Meta-Level Power

- Art is not just communication — it is a space for meaning-making, empathy, and uncertainty.
- Do not overload it with assignments. Let it ask the hard questions and dwell in complexity.