



**A Blade of Grass and Animating Democracy Launch Digital Guide  
To Inspire Partnerships Between Artists and City Leadership**

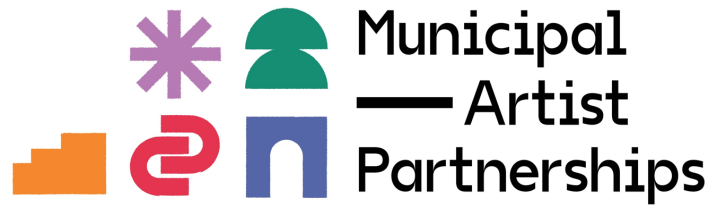
**Featuring Tools and Resources Developed Through Three Years of Research**

**Brooklyn, NY (February 10, 2020)**—A Blade of Grass and Animating Democracy, a program of Americans for the Arts, announced today the launch of Municipal-Artist Partnerships (MAP), a digital resources and relationship guide developed to help artists and city leadership establish collaborations that benefit their communities. The MAP guide, which was created over the course of three years of research, is the first publicly available platform of its kind. Designed to answer common questions about how to approach, structure, and evaluate Municipal-Artist partnerships, the MAP guide contains a wide range of content, from case studies that capture successful programs and tools to establish healthy relationships between partners and communities, to document templates that help prospective partners get started. A Blade of Grass, a national non-profit organization dedicated to nurturing socially engaged artists, and Animating Democracy, which promotes arts and culture as potent contributors to community, civic, and social change, envisioned the MAP guide as an evolving tool that both captures successful methodologies and encourages the expansion of such partnerships across the U.S. The MAP guide is free and accessible online at <https://municipal-artist.org>.

To support engagement with and use of the MAP guide, the project organizers and their partners plan to host a series of both in-person and web events throughout 2020. The first of these events will take the form of a webinar on February 19, 2020 at 3:00 PM EST. The live webinar will be hosted on the Americans for the Arts website and will include a walkthrough of the guide as well as discussion with the organizers of *My Park, My Pool, My City*, a three-year artistic residency by Forklift Danceworks with the Parks and Recreation Aquatics Division of Austin, Texas. More details on the event can be found at <http://bit.ly/2tKbUq9>. Additional related events and programs will be announced throughout the year.

“We created the MAP guide because we have seen that creative practices have an essential role to play in civic and social life. The positive impact of having artists engaged and at the table in developing solutions to seemingly intractable social problems are documented and undeniable,” said Deborah Fisher, Executive Director of A Blade of Grass. “At the same time, establishing new partnerships requires a high level of trust between artists and the people working in civic agencies, at every level. The MAP guide is intended first and foremost as a ‘relationship guide’ that gets artists and municipal partners on the same page about what’s possible; what each side needs from one another; and how to get started. We look forward to sharing this resource and to seeing more, and better, collaborations flourish between artists and civic partners.”

"We know that people learn best from their peers. The guide draws from the practical experience and lessons learned of dozens of artists and municipal leaders doing exemplary work across the country and



who are inspiring and paving the way for others,” said Pam Korza, co-director, Animating Democracy at Americans for the Arts.

The process to develop the MAP guide was initiated in 2017, with the support of an Our Town grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, with several goals in mind: to articulate the dynamics inherent to municipal and artist partnerships; to capture best practices and common challenges; to highlight successful projects that speak to the value and impact of these relationships; and to assist individuals who want to integrate creative practices within the workings of municipal governments. The resulting MAP guide includes these core sections:

- **Get Started**, which defines basic terminology and provides information on how to use the guide;
- **Nuts and Bolts**, which guides the reader through the tactics and approaches to establishing a partnership with information on funding, budgeting, communications, and evaluative frameworks as well as more qualitative details on motivations and power dynamics to support mutual understanding between collaborators;
- **Profiles**, which offers both long and short format case studies that highlight the diversity and range of municipal artist partnerships and describe the attributes that made these programs successful; and
- **Tools and Resources**, which includes templates, worksheets, reports, and videos to support prospective partners start the process for establishing their own partnerships.

The content provided through the MAP guide is grounded in A Blade of Grass and Animating Democracy’s own experiences with municipal-artist partnerships in New York, Boston, and Portland, Maine. It is supported through interviews with leadership in municipal agencies across the U.S., artists, third-party partners, and organizational administrators, as well as research on approximately two dozen projects and programs, including those implemented in Austin, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Nashville, New York, Philadelphia, and Seattle, among other locations. Research and content review was led by **Jan Cohen-Cruz**, the former Director of Research at A Blade of Grass; **Pam Korza**, Co-director of Animating Democracy; and **Prerana Reddy**, Director of Programs at A Blade of Grass.

Work on the project was further supported by a nine-person advisory council, which brought a wide range of experiences and perspectives to bear on the final MAP guide. The council included **Lyz Crane**, Deputy Director, ArtPlace America; **Jennifer Erickson**, Arts & Culture Director, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Boston, MA; **Maria Rosario Jackson**, Urban Planner and Senior Advisor, Arts & Culture, Kresge Foundation; **Gulgun Kayim**, Director of Art, Culture, & Creative Economy, City of Minneapolis, MN; **Nicole Crutchfield**, Director of Planning & Development, City of Fargo, ND; **Shirley Levy**, Chief of Staff, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs; **Lynn Osgood**, Executive Director, Civic Arts Austin, formerly GO collaborative; **Rad Pereira**, 2017 Public Artist in Residence with the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs; **Marty Pottenger**, Artist and Former Director of Art At Work, City of Portland, ME; **Diya Vij**, Associate Curator of Public Programs, Friends of the High Line, Formerly Co-Director of the Public Artist in Residence (PAIR) program at NYC Department of Cultural Affairs.



### **About A Blade of Grass**

A Blade of Grass is a national arts non-profit established in 2011 that nurtures socially engaged art through direct financial support to artists, advocating for artists working in the field, and creating digital and print media, documentary films, public programs, and research. For more information, please visit [www.abladeofgrass.org](http://www.abladeofgrass.org).

Our work is made possible through the generous support of The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; David Rockefeller Fund; SPART; The Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation; The Cowles Charitable Trust; The Robert & Mercedes Eichholz Foundation; Re-Inc.; in part by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature; in part by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council; in part by the National Endowment for the Arts; our groundbreakers Annette Blum, Agnes Gund, Eva Haller, Shelley Frost Rubin, and Linda Schejola; and our growing family of individual donors.

### **About Animating Democracy**

Animating Democracy is a program of Americans for the Arts that inspires, promotes, and connects arts and culture as potent contributors to civic and social change. Working locally, nationally, and across sectors, Animating Democracy creates useful resources for artists, cultural, and community leaders, and funders; builds knowledge about quality engagement and evaluation; and brings national visibility to arts for change work. For more information, please visit <http://animatingdemocracy.org/>.

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