



*Art-Based Evaluation

PREPARED FOR ARTREACH TORONTO BY MARGO CHARLTON OF
RESONANCE CREATIVE CONSULTING PARTNERS

101



GOAL Youth Workshop Series

The Grassroots Organizing and Leadership (GOAL) Youth Capacity Building Workshop Series was developed in 2007 by youth-led organizations, funders and other partners to provide access to learning opportunities that can enhance the work of young people, artists and youth-led groups. Through different strategies and in different spaces, young people are working to make change and to have an impact on communities across the city of Toronto. To take this passion and commitment and channel it into a project, individuals or organizations often require training, tools and supports that are not always available to emerging, youth-led groups.

This workshop series provides facilitators (many of whom are young people, or those that have been involved in grassroots organizing and project development) to share their insights and resources. Many groups have struggled to find a financial template that works for them, decode grant guidelines or define what structure works for them as an organization. Accordingly, past topics have included financial management for nonprofits, fundraising, grant-writing, and models of youth work. These free sessions provide an accessible and safe learning space for young people and groups to ask questions, receive support and demystify process.

The workshops are developed based on needs identified by young people in Toronto. Participants who attend 5 or more workshops in the series receive a certificate.

The GOAL Youth Workshop Series is implemented by ArtReach Toronto, in partnership with various organizations and youth groups including; Grassroots Youth Collaborative, Laidlaw Foundation, City of Toronto, Schools without Borders, For Youth Initiative and Toronto Community Foundation.

Special thanks go to the facilitators for sharing their knowledge and expertise, as well as the following partners that have provided funding for the workshops, resource guides and online toolkit:

Canadian Heritage

City of Toronto Cultural Services

Laidlaw Foundation

The Lawson Foundation

Toronto Community Foundation

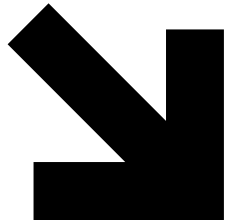


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*Introduction

ABE Evaluation:



Improvisation, openness, risk and play are at the heart of creative activity. Why not put that kind of free play to work for evaluation?

Art-Based Evaluation (**ABE**) uses creative activities as a way of expressing value. Numbers cannot fully express the impact of a project but questionnaires and interviews also have limitations. **ABE** uses metaphor as a way of exploring concepts and ideas that might be difficult or uncomfortable to communicate in other ways. When Art-Based Evaluation is combined with other evaluation methods it helps provide a well-rounded picture of the impact of a project for participants, facilitators, project planners and funders.



Objectives of ABE

- **Encourage multiple ways of expression.**
- **Express complex ideas.**
- **Encourage participants to share their feelings.**
- **Embrace the idea that we are all creative beings.**
- **Build on the creativity fostered in the project.**
- **Lay the ground for more in-depth responses through questionnaires or interviews.**
- **Give a quick snapshot of where a group is at.**
- **Generate materials (poems, drawing, collages, etc.) to be used in final reports.**

**ABE activities,
combined with
recording and
photos, can be
used to document
the process
and capture
the history of
a project.**



Benefits of ABE

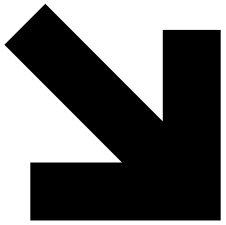
- **Helps group members get to know each other better.**
- **Triggers memories that can lead to group discussion.**
- **Leads to a sense of group history and belonging.**
- **Provides the safety of metaphor to express negative and positive reaction.**
- **Helps participants step back from their work and reflect on what they have accomplished.**
- **Helps participants speak about the project in a less literal way**
- **Honours the creativity of participants.**
- **Provides program planners and funders with another perspective on participants' experiences.**

Using ABE

 **ABE** activities draw upon all art modalities such as working with colours in collaging and drawing exercises; playing with words in poetry writing and storytelling; and using sound, movement and image theatre exercises.

ABE can happen at all stages of a project to help the group and facilitators get a sense of how the project is going, how participants are feeling, and what might need to change. **ABE** activities, combined with recording and photos, can be used to document the process and capture the history of a project.

* Beginning of Project



ABE at the beginning of a project provides participants with an opportunity to express their concerns and reactions upon entering the project. It also records a moment in time and gives participants and facilitators something to go back to at the end of the project to see what has shifted. For example: a collage or group drawing can be brought out again at the end to spark a discussion on how the group's impressions have or haven't changed.

Examples of ABE Activities for Beginning of a Project

First Glance

Objectives

- To encourage participants to view familiar things from new angles.
- To give opportunities to share first impressions of the project's surroundings.
- To see if first impressions change during the course of the project.
- Captures the beginning of a project.
- Acts as a benchmark for future comparisons.

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change**

Steps:

- 1.** Hand out the “altered” photos (see Materials for explanation) of the building, neighbourhood or community.
- 2.** Ask participants to carefully look at the photos. What do they notice, what stands out, what is pleasant, what is unpleasant?
- 3.** Ask participants to first describe what they see rather than what they think or feel. Ask them to note colours, textures, shapes, sizes, objects.
- 4.** Next ask participants to note what feelings emerge when they look at the images. Urge them to go with first impressions. There is no right or wrong answer.
- 5.** Gather the descriptive words with the feeling words and ask participants to find interesting combinations. For example: nervous, long shadows; rough, sad concrete.
- 6.** Facilitator records poetic phrases.
- 7.** Participants select text and combine it with the images.

Materials:

- **Photos of buildings, neighbourhood or community.** Use photos from organizational publications or newspapers. Cut them up, enlarge or reduce them in order to create new ways of seeing the familiar.

Tips and Variations:

- This activity can be done by individuals, pairs, small groups or a large group.
- If you have access to photocopiers ask the participants to do the cutting, enlarging and reducing.
- Keep the phrases and images they might be useful at some other point in the project.
- Repeat this exercise later and see if participants' impressions and feelings have changed.
- Instead of using existing photos, provide group members with cameras and ask them to explore the neighbourhood. In selecting shots, ask them to look at the familiar from new angles.
- Ask each photographer to tell stories about their experiences in taking photos. What was intriguing? What was surprising?

Found Poetry

Objectives

- To share the grant application process with participants.
- To assist participants in deconstructing "*grant speak*."
- To transform one text into another.

In addition to brainstorming, cut out more words and phrases from copies of the grant application and use them in creating poems.



Steps

- 1. Hand out copies of the mandate and objectives of the project taken from the grant application. Ask group members to select words that stand out or interest them. For example: *empower, transform, collective, marginalized, reporting.***
- 2. Take one word at a time and brainstorm the first words that come to mind when you hear the word.**
- 3. Ask participants to select some of the words to create a poem. Participants may want to add a few joining or connecting words or change word endings.**
- 4. Share the found poems.**

Materials

- *Copy of the mandate of the group and/or objectives stated for project in grant application, paper and pen for each group member, flip chart paper.*

Tips and Variations:

- **Revisit the poems at the end of project and discuss whether or not the project objectives were met.**
- **In addition to brainstorming, cut out more words and phrases from copies of the grant application and use them in creating poems.**
- **Try putting the poems to rhythms or beats.**
- **Work in small groups to find ways to present the poems.**

Memory Boxes

Objectives

- To provide a place to collect objects, words or images that are important to participants.
- To help participants recall moments in the project and to reflect on how things changed/or didn't change.

Steps

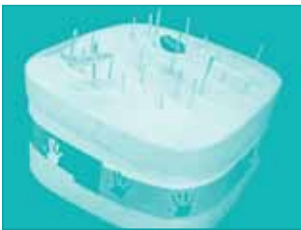
- 1.** Provide each participant with a small box. The boxes can be painted, written on, collaged or decorated in whatever form the participant chooses. The outside of the box represents the community, group or project (external) and the inside of the box represents their experience and feelings (internal).
- 2.** During the project urge the group to place things in the box that capture their feelings about the project or are connected to the Ask participants to select some of the words to create a poem.
- 3.** Revisit throughout the project to add or remove things from the outside or inside of the box.
- 4.** Organize a display or an activity to show boxes but give the option to keep the inside private.

Materials

- *Small wooden boxes or cardboard boxes with lids (from Dollar Stores), glue, scissors, old magazines, paint, etc.*

Tips and Variations

- **Record the making of the boxes at different stages during the project.**
- **View the images at the end so the participants can see how their boxes changed.**

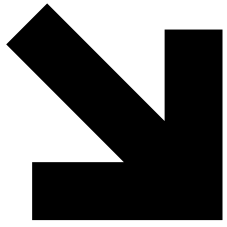


➤ *Memory Box Exterior*



➤ *Memory Box Interior*

*During a Project



ABE done while a project is in progress gives facilitators a sense of how individuals and the group as whole are finding the process. These activities focus on building communication skills and identify power dynamics in the group. This can help group leaders see if they need to adjust their planning for the rest of the project.

- Acts as a check in.
- Builds group communication skills.

Examples of Activities used During a Project

Collage

Objectives

- To check in with participants to see how they are feeling about the process.
- To stimulate group discussion and to flag tension or problems.

Steps

1. Ask participants to cut or rip out images and words from magazines that express how they feel about the project.
2. Create individual collages, use markers to add more words.
3. Share collage in large group and discuss.



Ask participants to cut or rip out images and words from magazines that express how they feel about the project.

Materials

- *Old magazines, glue, markers*

Tips and Variations

- **Do this as a large group adding pieces and discussing the project while the collage is being created.**



- *Individual Collage*

Blind Cars *(Based on Augusto Boal's Theatre of Oppressed training activities)*

Objectives

- **To identify power dynamics within the process.**
- **To build group communications skills.**

Steps

- 1. Ask the group to divide into pairs. One person is the follower and one person is the leader. The follower is the “car” and the leader is the “driver.”**

- 2.** The leader “drives” the car by signaling through touch. A tap on the head means go forward, on the back means back up, on the left and right shoulders means turn in that direction. No touch means STOP!
- 3.** Do this activity in silence. Reverse roles.
- 4.** Discuss questions such as: *What did it feel like to lead and to follow? What did it feel like to not know where you were going? What made it difficult to move? How is this game like the project?*

Materials

- None

Tips and Variations

- **Doing this in silence is important so the participants can focus on alternative forms of communication.**
- **Urge drivers to be careful as they steer their cars, be aware of objects in the room, walls, and other drivers and cars.**
- **Variation #1:** *Use the person’s name to steer. Leader moves around the room and finds a variety of ways to say the follower’s name (whispering, high-pitched, low-pitched, etc). The follower moves in the direction of the voice, when they don’t hear their name they stop.*
- **Variation #2:** *Use sounds to steer. Sounds can be vocalized or be percussive using parts of the body. The follower moves in the direction of the sound, when there is no sound they stop.*
- **Variation # 3:** *Using the above two variations, the facilitator acts as a “rogue” driver. The facilitator tries to copy the sound and steer the “car” off course. The “driver” tries to maintain control.*

* End of Project



ABE at the end of the project is a reflective activity to help participants think about what happened, what changed, and how they are feeling about the experience. These activities need time so set aside at least one workshop for evaluation. Reflection and sharing cannot happen if participants feel rushed. The end of a project can also be an emotional

time; participants are ending an experience that has been meaningful or valuable to them. ABE can help the group find closure.

- **Deconstruct the experience.**
- **Reflect and share with the group.**
- **Provide feedback to the program.**

Examples of Activities to use at End of the Project

Rotating Mural

Objectives

- **To help participants share their reflections with other members of the group.**
- **To help participants see they are not alone in their reactions.**

The end of a project can also be an emotional time; participants are ending an experience that has been meaningful or valuable to them. ABE can help the group find closure.



Steps

- 1. Brainstorm words or phrases that come to mind when thinking of the project they have completed.**
- 2. Roll out the paper on the floor or table top. Participants are evenly spaced around the paper. Ask them to think about themselves and their involvement in the project. Then ask them to create an image that expresses their experience. Remind the group it doesn't have to be a literal representation of the work but could be a metaphor, e.g.: *they felt like a leaf on a plant.***
- 3. Participants create their image in the space in front of them. After some time ask them to stop and to move clockwise around the paper and to take the place of the person on their left.**
- 4. Ask them to look at their neighbour's image and then add to it. Side-coach during the activity to remind participants to include details, to represent themselves and other people in the picture. Suggest that they add words or phrases and to think about the colours they are using.**
- 5. Continue to rotate around the mural until each person returns to their original work.**
- 6. Ask participants to look at what has been added to their image.**
- 7. Discuss what they see and feel.**
- 8. Facilitator records discussion.**

Materials

- *Roll of mural paper, markers, crayons*

Tips and Variations

- Large groups could move over two, three or four positions so it doesn't take too long to return to the "home" position. If the group is larger than 15 consider having two murals created at the same time.
- After they return to their "home" position they can cut out their image or leave the mural as a whole. If the images are cut out they can be placed on the wall in new arrangements.

Journey Drawing

Objectives

- To encourage participants to share their reflections with other members of the group.
- To help participants see they are not alone in their reactions.

Steps

1. Brainstorm words or phrases that come to mind when they think of a journey.
2. Ask participants to draw a road on the page then add potholes and bridges and other journeying metaphors. Side-coach and suggest they use words or phrases and not to forget to put themselves and others on the path. Encourage them to explore both the ups and downs of the journey.
3. Ask group to share their pictures with each other. Discuss what they see and feel.

Materials

- Paper for each participant, crayons, markers, etc.

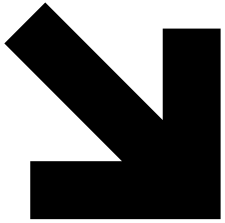
Tips and Variations

- **Do this as a large group. Facilitator draws a long road on the mural paper and asks the group to work together to draw a collective journey.**
- **Use the mural paper to draw the neighbourhood or community. Add words or phrases to respond to the ideas about art in the community or suggest sentence stems that the group can fill in such as:** *“A community with art is like...”; “My community needs...”; “The best thing about my community is...”; “A community without art-making is like...”*



- *Journey map*

* Conclusion



Resonance Creative Consulting Partners is a resource for organizations looking for new ways to gather and circulate evidence about the value of their work with communities.

Founded in 2006, we combine hands-on experience with research to illuminate, interrogate and expand on current evaluation practices in the fields of community development and community-engaged art.

Resonance is a collaboration between Margo Charlton and Loree Lawrence. Together, we have over forty years of experience as artists, facilitators and program coordinators in the fields of community-engaged art and grass-roots community development. We have worked with diverse communities throughout Canada and presented at national and international events in the United States, Britain, Greece, Nicaragua, Panama, Cuba and Brazil.

Resonance has developed **evaluation-as-process**, an integrated, creative, participatory approach to documentation, reflection and evaluation that engages program participants, community arts organizations, community developers, urban planners and funders in building their evaluation capacities, examining their community impacts and achieving their goals. We offer training workshops in evaluation planning and can design evaluation plans for organizations.

Art-based evaluation is one of the tools we use in our own work as community arts facilitators and an integral part of our evaluation training tool kit.

The activities described in this manual are examples of some of the **ABE** activities used by Resonance Creative Consulting. Feel free to use them, improvise and discover your own variations. If you use these activities let us know how they worked. Take photos and send them to us.

Contact us at:

info@resonanceconsulting.ca



Recommended Resources

Books:

New Creative Community: The Art Cultural Development *by Arlene Goldbard*
New Village Press

Websites:

www.artandcommunity.com
www.communityarts.net

Articles

Mapping Courage: A Poetic Evaluation of Murals *by Davy Preston Knittle*
<http://communityarts.blogspot.com>

How the Arts Measures Up: Australian Research Into Social Impact
<http://www.artshunter.com.au/communityarts/papers/Commedia.ht>

