



Where We Meet:

Summary for Arts Organisations

A good practice resource for arts organisations and artists
with lived experience of displacement

Co-authored by Mia Gubbay and Soizig Carey

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Introduction

Where We Meet is a transformative resource that provides arts organisations with tools and insights to work ethically and effectively with artists who have lived experience of displacement. Commissioned by Cross Borders, a Scottish Refugee Council project, *Where We Meet* responds to systemic challenges in the creative industries and the needs and aspirations raised by artists navigating them. It offers guidance on fostering equity, navigating intersectional identities, and dismantling oppressive structures that disproportionately affect displaced artists.

The following summaries of *Where We Meet* have been produced to address the distinct yet intertwined needs of arts organisations and artists with lived experience of displacement. Recognising the demand for a concise version of this vital resource, Scottish Refugee Council have crafted two tailored documents: one specifically for arts organisations and another for artists. While each summary speaks to the unique challenges and expectations of its intended audience, both aim to foster a shared understanding and collaborative spirit.

For arts organisations, the summary provides guidance on dismantling systemic barriers, fostering equity, and creating inclusive practices that empower artists. It emphasises the ethical and practical considerations necessary for meaningful collaboration, ensuring that artists are not left to navigate these challenges alone.

For artists, the summary offers strategies to advocate for their rights, maintain creative autonomy, and build sustainable practices in a sector often shaped by inequities. It reinforces the message that artists should not be expected to fight their way into opportunities but instead be supported in accessing spaces that respect and amplify their voices.

Although these documents are designed with different audiences in mind, both groups may find value in reading the other's summary. By understanding the responsibilities placed on organisations and the rights and aspirations of artists, a stronger, more equitable relationship can be cultivated. These pieces are not just practical guides; they are a reflection of the shared responsibility to reimagine the arts as a space of care, collaboration, and transformation.

Together, these summaries invite both organisations and artists to reflect on their roles and commitments, fostering mutual respect and solidarity. Through this shared understanding, we can build a creative landscape where everyone's voice is valued, and opportunities are not just created but equitably shared.

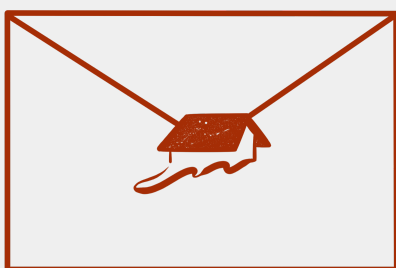


Summary of *Where We Meet* for Arts Organisations

Introduction: Purpose and context

Through testimonies, research, and practical examples, the *Where We Meet* report highlights the need for organisations to move beyond tokenistic practices and toward meaningful collaborations rooted in solidarity, equity, and mutual respect. The following summary of *Where We Meet* is a call to action; it provides an overview of the ways in which organisations can re-evaluate their roles in the broader cultural ecology and take deliberate steps toward inclusive and supportive practices.

Key themes within *Where We Meet*



1. Understanding Lived Experience

The concept of lived experience is central to working ethically with artists who have lived experience of displacement. *Where We Meet* emphasised the embodied knowledge that displaced artists bring to their work. For arts organisations, understanding this concept means:

- **Recognising Advocacy as Practice:** Employing artists with lived experience of displacement is inherently an act of advocacy, given the dehumanising narratives perpetuated by mainstream media and political systems. Organisations should actively support artists in presenting their authentic stories, avoiding reductive or stereotypical portrayals.
- **Balancing Presentation and Representation:** Acknowledge the difference between showcasing artists' work (presentation) and co-creating platforms for their voices to shape public narratives (representation). Both are valuable but require sensitivity to the power dynamics involved.
- **Empowering Self-Identification:** Artists must be allowed to define their own identities. For some, labels like "refugee artist" may offer visibility and connection; for others, they may feel limiting or stigmatizing. Organisations should follow the artist's lead and avoid imposing labels or expectations.

2. Addressing Intersectionality within Accessibility and Inclusion

Intersectionality highlights how overlapping identities - such as race, gender, and displacement - create unique experiences of marginalisation. Key recommendations include:

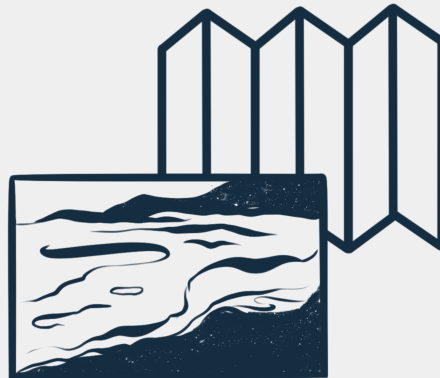
- **Flexible Communication:** Organisations must adapt communication styles to suit artists' preferences, offering alternatives to text-heavy formats like emails. For instance, using voice notes or video applications can improve accessibility and inclusivity.
- **Tailored Recruitment:** Open recruitment processes to include non-traditional formats, such as video or audio submissions, and recognise that many artists with lived experience of displacement may have non-linear career paths.
- **Awareness of Structural Bias:** Understand how biases around race, class, and language intersect with displacement to create additional barriers. For instance, assumptions about English proficiency or educational qualifications often perpetuate exclusion.

3. Valuing Artistic Labour

Where We Meet underscores the importance of fair compensation and recognition for the labour of artists with lived experience of displacement, addressing systemic issues such as:

- **Time and Remuneration:** Fair pay is critical, but so is allowing sufficient time for reflection and creative freedom. Many artists are pressured to produce quick results, which reinforces exploitative, product-oriented models rooted in colonial values.
- **Alternatives to Monetary Payment:** For artists without the legal right to work, organisations should explore non-monetary forms of support, such as access to training, equipment, or vouchers for essential needs. These forms of recognition should be implemented sensitively and in consultation with the artist.
- **Combating Tokenism:** Avoid symbolic gestures that merely give the appearance of inclusion. Tokenism reinforces systemic inequalities and often leaves artists feeling devalued or exploited. Instead, involve artists meaningfully in decision-making processes and organisational governance.

4. Building Networks and Relationships



Developing strong, lasting relationships is essential for supporting artists with lived experience of displacement and fostering a sense of belonging:

- **Connecting with Grassroots Organisations:** Partnering with community-led organisations can bridge gaps, creating opportunities for knowledge exchange and collaboration. These relationships should be reciprocal, with clear benefits for both parties.
- **Mentorship and Volunteering:** Informal networks and mentorship programs can help artists navigate the complexities of the creative

industries. Organisations should create spaces for these connections to flourish while ensuring that artists' labour is appropriately valued.

- **Curating Visibility: Representation matters.** By employing the voices and work of underrepresented artists, organisations can challenge existing power structures and inspire broader societal change.

5. Safe and Brave Spaces

Creating environments that respect and support artists' autonomy is critical for fostering meaningful collaboration:

- **Safe Spaces vs. Brave Spaces:** While “safe spaces” are often protective and non-confrontational, “brave spaces” encourage open, honest dialogue about conflict, identity, and systemic barriers. Organisations must strive to create brave spaces that empower artists to share their experiences without fear of judgment or harm.
- **Trauma-Informed Practices:** Working with artists who may have experienced displacement or trauma requires sensitivity and preparation. This may include providing content warnings, offering regular check-ins, and ensuring access to support systems.

6. Systemic Change and Anti-Racist Practice



Addressing systemic inequities requires organisations to critically examine their own practices and structures:

- **From Charity to Social Justice:** Move away from hierarchical “charity” models that reinforce power imbalances. Instead, adopt social justice frameworks that emphasise equity, participation, and collective decision-making.

- Naming Racism: Use tools and resources to identify and challenge racist practices within your organisation. This includes ensuring that anti-racist practices are embedded at all levels.
- Long-Term Commitment: Avoid short-term, project-based inclusion efforts. Instead, develop sustained relationships with artists and communities, recognising that meaningful change takes time and ongoing effort.

7. Practical Tools and Resources

To implement the recommendations outlined in *Where We Meet*, organisations can:

- Invest in Training: Provide staff with resources and training on trauma-informed practices, anti-racism, and inclusive communication.
- Ensure Accessibility: Budget for interpreters, childcare, and other supports that make participation feasible for artists with diverse needs.
- Adopt Transparent Policies: Develop clear guidelines around pay, intellectual property, and informed consent to protect artists' rights and autonomy.

Case Studies and Examples

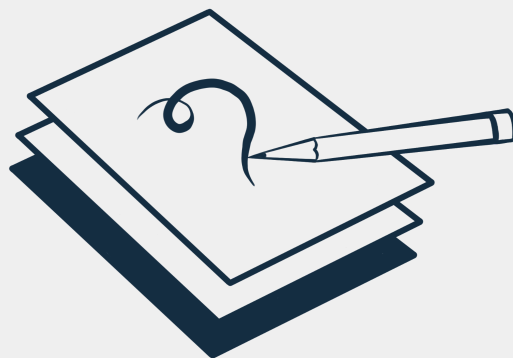
Where We Meet provides real-world examples of successful collaborations, illustrating the principles in action:

- Collaborative Photography Projects: Artists are encouraged to take the lead in deciding how they wish to be represented visually, ensuring that photography captures their strengths and complexity.
- Intersectional Programming: Organisations that have embraced intersectional approaches have successfully dismantled barriers to access and participation, creating spaces where artists feel genuinely valued.
- Community-Led Partnerships: Grassroots organisations have played a key role in bridging gaps between artists with lived experience of displacement and mainstream arts institutions, highlighting the importance of mutual respect and shared goals.

Conclusion: A Call to Action

Where We Meet challenges arts organisations to think critically about their practices and to embrace discomfort as part of the growth process. It invites genuine engagement with international talents, cultural practices and perspectives. By centring the voices of artists with lived experience of displacement and committing to long-term, systemic change, organisations can play a vital role in creating a more equitable and inclusive arts sector.

Links and Resources



Where We Meet: [Full Report](#)

Where We Meet: [Summary for Artists and Creatives](#)

Resources on Tokenism

- [Tokenism and its long-term consequences evidence in the literary field](#)
- [How to avoid Tokenism](#)

Resources on white saviour complex

- [Understanding the 'White Saviour' complex](#)

Resources and training in PTSD and complex PTSD

- [Refugee Care](#)
- [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder](#)
- [Working With Trauma](#)

- [Scotland's Mental Health First Aid \(SMHFA\)](#)
- [A Roadmap for Creating Trauma-Informed and Responsive Change: Guidance for Organisations, Systems and Workforces in Scotland](#)

Resources on artists agreements and intellectual property

- [FACT | Easy Read Artist Contract](#)
- [Scottish Artists Union](#)

Resources on English as an additional language and working with interpreters

- [ACT ESOL Language, Resistance, Theatre Publication](#)
- [Working with Interpreters](#)
- [Good practice about working with interpreters \(bristol.gov.uk\)](#)

Resources on awareness, consent, co-production, language, tone, remuneration and aftercare

- [Photographing New Scots: a best practice guide](#)

Resources for collective decision making

- [Toolkit for Cooperative, Collective, & Collaborative Cultural Work](#)
- [Solidarity Knows No Borders Organising Workbook](#), Solidarity Knows No Borders

Examples of co-designed work with artists

- [Community Co-design](#)
- [Co-design Best Practice](#)

Resources on barriers and marginalisation

- [This Work isn't For Us](#)
- [Open Up: addressing the barriers facing Black and Black-Irish artists' access to funding and opportunities](#)
- [CRER Publications](#)

Resources on the right to work and asylum support

- [Lift the Ban](#)
- [Applying for Permission to Work \(Asylum\)](#)
- [Asylum Seekers with Permission to Work in Scotland Factsheet](#)
- [UK Employers Guide to Hiring Refugees](#)

*If you are interested in reviewing your recruitment processes to be more inclusive, you can contact employability@scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk for more advice.

Resources on community partnerships

- [Working Better Together - Creative community Hubs Project Report by whalearts - Issuu](#)
- [RISE statement on working with the refugee community \(aktiontanz.de\)](#)

Resources on anti-racist practice and naming racism

- [Being Antiracist | National Museum of African American History and Culture \(si.edu\)](#)
- [Racism and mental health | Mental Health Foundation](#)
- [Anti-Racist Art Education \(ARAE\) Resources | NSEAD](#)
- [An Antiracist Reading List — Ibram X. Kendi \(ibramxkendi.com\)](#)
- [Racial Healing Handbook](#)
- [Anti-Racism Resources - BASW England | BASW](#)
- [Anti-Blackness/ Colourism](#)
- [Anti-racist practice examples in museums - Museums Galleries Scotland](#)
- [Racism and mental health - Mind](#)
- [\(PDF\) Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism \(researchgate.net\)](#)
- [Training - Interfaith Glasgow - Flourishing through Dialogue](#)

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