

# Is the Arts Elevate Embedded Community Artist for Youth Wellness Program Right for Us?

Embedding a professional artist inside your youth-serving organization is a real commitment — of space, staff time, funding, and trust. Before you read the full toolkit, this overview helps you decide whether the model fits your community right now. *If it does, the toolkit gives you everything you need to build it. If it doesn't yet, that's useful information too.*

## What an embedded artist program is

A professional artist works inside your organization over weeks or months — not as a guest instructor visiting once, but as a consistent creative presence who builds relationships with your young people, your staff, and the work itself. Programming grows from those relationships rather than from a fixed curriculum.

This model	Not this model
Sustained relationship over weeks or months · Wellness-focused, not performance-driven · Artist co-designs with your team · Youth are creative agents, not students · Relationship-building is the program	One-off workshops or visiting artists · Performance- or product-focused arts class · Preset curriculum delivered to youth · Youth as audience or pupils · Activities first, relationships second

## Quick fit check

*Eight questions. Be honest. "Yes" to most of them means you're ready to dig into the toolkit. Several "not yet" answers means the toolkit will help you build toward readiness — start with Section 2.*

- ✓ Our mission includes a real commitment to youth wellness — not just enrichment.
- ✓ We can dedicate a consistent physical space for 90+ minutes per week, for at least 10 weeks.
- ✓ At least one staff member can be present during every session — not leading, but supporting.
- ✓ We can recruit 8–15 youth through personal relationships (not just flyers and social media).
- ✓ Leadership supports this beyond a single staff champion.
- ✓ We're open to co-designing with the artist rather than directing them.
- ✓ We can plan for and host a culminating showcase that families and community can attend.
- ✓ We understand that relationship-building takes time, and outcomes may not be visible in week three.

## What it costs

Embedded residencies scale to your capacity. You don't need the largest budget to run a meaningful program — you need the right one for your community.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>LEAN</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>\$6,500–\$12,000</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Shorter program, in-kind space, lean materials</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STANDARD</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>\$13,000–\$21,000</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Full semester, dedicated staff time, evaluation</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ROBUST</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>\$21,000–\$30,500</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Showcase, documentation, full evaluation suite</i></p>
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*Each tier covers artist stipend, materials, staff coordination, and a capstone event. The lean model assumes shorter programming and in-kind space; the robust model assumes a full semester with substantial documentation and evaluation. See Appendix A of the full toolkit for line-by-line guidance.*

## What it takes to do well

### Three months before you launch

- Confirm space, staff coordinator, and budget.
- Begin artist search using the RFP template in Section 3.
- Build your safeguarding and mandatory reporting protocol (Section 4).

### Six weeks before

- Artist selected, contract signed, background check complete.
- Begin personal, relationship-based youth recruitment.
- Send introduction letter and consent forms to families (Section 4).

### During the program

- Weekly sessions led by the artist, supported by your staff.
- Midpoint check-in to adapt, not just assess (Section 5).
- Lightweight impact capture: participant voice, staff reflection, parent observation (Section 6).

### At the end

- Culminating showcase — the moment when youth experience their work being witnessed.
- Final reflections from artist and coordinator (Appendix B).
- Plan for cycle two with reduced overhead.

## Common reasons not yet

Plenty of organizations aren't ready for this model on first read — and that's a finding, not a failure. The most common reasons:

- No staff member can be present at every session. The artist can't be your only adult in the room.
- Space changes every week, or isn't reliably available for the full program length.
- Leadership wants this as enrichment programming. The model needs deeper buy-in.
- You're looking for a curriculum to deliver. The model is co-designed, not pre-built.
- There's no safeguarding lead — no named person an artist can call when something hard happens.

*Most of these are solvable in three to six months of intentional preparation. The toolkit's Section 2 walks you through where to start.*

*The organizations that thrive in this model are not the ones with everything figured out before they start. They are the ones most willing to adapt, communicate openly with their artist, and keep students at the center of every decision.*

## Ready to keep going?

Read the full Arts Elevate Embedded Artist Toolkit at <https://www.glcfoundation.org/download-the-toolkit/>. Section 2 contains a complete self-assessment checklist; Sections 3 and 4 walk you through finding an artist and preparing to launch.

Questions, ideas, or feedback? Contact Jennifer Aradhya at [jennifer@glcfoundation.org](mailto:jennifer@glcfoundation.org). Arts Elevate is always looking for thought partners as the model grows.

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