

Engagement Goals

Our engagement strategies are successful when they achieve these goals.

We use these goals to evaluate our current engagement strategies, assess new proposed strategies, and guide productive discussions about how to improve our work.

RELEVANCE

Connected to compelling needs, assets, and interests in Santa Cruz County.
Connected to our core content of contemporary art and regional history.

SUSTAINABILITY

Provides important resources to help the MAH thrive financially and organizationally.

BRIDGING

Brings community members together across differences.
Celebrates diversity and encourages unexpected connections.

PARTICIPATION

Invites diverse community members to make meaningful contributions as co-creators, collaborators, and energized constituents.

IGNITING

Inspires excitement and curiosity about art and history.
Expands opportunities for deeper engagement beyond the museum.

While all of these goals are important, RELEVANCE and SUSTAINABILITY come first.

RELEVANCE is required for minimum viability as an engagement strategy. If it's not relevant to our community and/or our institutional content, it's not on the table.

SUSTAINABILITY is required to take a project from idea or pilot to ongoing investment. Even the most compelling, relevant strategy requires buy-in, time, and funding.

BRIDGING, PARTICIPATION, and IGNITING are present to different degrees in different engagement strategies. We try to maximize them across all our work.

RELEVANCE

Connected to compelling and evolving needs, assets, and interests in Santa Cruz County.
Connected to our core content of contemporary art and regional history.

An engagement strategy demonstrates HIGH relevance if:

- It is driven by a stated community need
- It showcases unique local artistic, historical, creative, or cultural assets
- It is derived from ongoing dialogue with a range of diverse local communities
- It is strongly connected to our collection or other museum assets
- It uses local places, stories, traditions, cultures and history to instill a sense of pride, place, identity, interest and investment in Santa Cruz County
- It uses contemporary art to ignite the imagination, encourage exploration and inspire artistic experimentation which contribute to a more creative community
- It relates to of-the-moment issues, concerns, and activities in Santa Cruz County
- It is continuously adapted in response to changing community needs/assets

An engagement strategy demonstrates AVERAGE relevance if:

- It connects to a stated community need
- It connects to unique local artistic, historical, creative, or cultural assets
- It connects to museum assets
- It connects to art, history, creativity, and/or culture
- It connects to life in Santa Cruz County
- It can change and adapt in response to changing community needs/assets

An engagement strategy demonstrates LOW relevance if:

- It is tangential or unrelated to Santa Cruz County
- It is tangential or unrelated to contemporary art and local history
- It stays the same even as the context changes

SUSTAINABILITY

Provides important resources to help the MAH thrive financially and organizationally.

An engagement strategy demonstrates HIGH sustainability if:

- It generates more money than it costs to produce
- It takes a reasonable and definable amount of staff time
- It is scheduled in a complementary way to other projects
- It can be replicated and scaled at low cost
- It attracts many enthusiastic participants
- It attracts donations and support from community members

An engagement strategy demonstrates AVERAGE sustainability if:

- It generates about as much money as it costs to produce
- It is intense but manageable to make it happen
- It has a consistent and repeatable format
- It attracts a healthy number of participants

An engagement strategy demonstrates LOW sustainability if:

- It loses a lot of money
- It takes more staff time than anticipated
- It causes an inordinate amount of stress to staff
- It is hard to replicate
- It attracts a dwindling number of participants or is significantly underutilized

BRIDGING

Brings community members together across differences.
Celebrates diversity and encourages unexpected connections.

An engagement strategy demonstrates HIGH bridging if:

- It involves collaborators/participants from very diverse backgrounds
- It involves collaborators on an equal playing field with each other and with MAH staff in co-defining assets, needs, and goals
- It involves people who are not traditional museum users
- It catalyzes new collaborations and relationships among strangers
- It creates the potential for deeper collaborations and relationships among strangers
- It draws surprising connections across wide-ranging content areas
- It fosters a plurality of viewpoints, sometimes intentionally clashing cultures to bridge them
- It opens up conversations “across the aisles” of seemingly entrenched issues by building trust and reciprocity among diverse participants

An engagement strategy demonstrates AVERAGE bridging if:

- It involves collaborators/participants from somewhat diverse backgrounds
- It respects participants and collaborators’ assets, needs, and goals
- It draws new connections across content areas
- It invites people to see and participate alongside people who are not like them
- It encourages participants to go out of their comfort zones and try something new

An engagement strategy demonstrates LOW bridging if:

- It is primarily designed by or for people with a shared background or affinity
- It focuses on one topic or highly-intersecting topics
- It does not encourage people to interact with strangers
- It reinforces comfortable interactions with and perceptions of “people like me”

PARTICIPATION

Invites diverse community members to make meaningful contributions as co-creators, collaborators, and energized constituents.

An engagement strategy demonstrates HIGH participation if:

- It empowers visitors to become producers as well as consumers of art and history
- It is designed in partnership with community members
- It relies on what participants do or contribute cognitively and/or physically
- It produces a wide range of acceptable outcomes and changes/evolves in response to participation
- It invites people of many backgrounds, learning styles and skill levels to participate meaningfully
- It showcases participants' diverse skills, knowledge and perspectives.
- It is designed to bring participants together in the process and/or outcome
- It inspires others to contribute

An engagement strategy demonstrates AVERAGE participation if:

- It empowers participants as active learners who can experiment and explore
- It is designed via a process that incorporates some community feedback
- It showcases what participants do or contribute cognitively and/or physically
- It can change based on structured feedback or prototyping
- It invites people of many backgrounds, learning styles, and skill levels to participate
- It is enjoyable to watch others participate as a spectator

An engagement strategy demonstrates LOW participation if:

- It does not invite visitors to contribute or engage actively
- It is primarily designed by staff without community consultation
- It represents a single story, voice, or experience
- It is static and non-interactive
- It is unresponsive to community feedback

IGNITION

Inspires excitement and curiosity about contemporary art and local history.
Expands opportunities for deeper engagement beyond the museum.

An engagement strategy demonstrates HIGH ignition if:

- It is perceived by participants/press/industry professionals as highly innovative and dynamic
- It offers compelling experiences for nontraditional museum users and collaborators
- It inspires collaborators and participants to develop future projects together outside of MAH activities
- It empowers participants to explore new things, take a class, or get involved in a new activity/group
- It energizes participants to come back to the MAH for other experiences
- It challenges and expands participants' definitions of art and history

An engagement strategy demonstrates AVERAGE ignition if:

- It is perceived by community members/press as exciting and interesting
- It attracts both traditional and nontraditional museum users and collaborators
- It energizes collaborators about their work
- It sparks new ideas and new ways of thinking

An engagement strategy demonstrates LOW ignition if:

- It is perceived as dull or "business as usual"
- It attracts a consistent or declining number of participants
- It reinforces knowledge or experiences that are already familiar