



Virtual Content, Digital Engagement, and Distance Learning **Considerations**

While experiences in arts and culture are traditionally communal, shared in time and space, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increase in online and virtual arts programming. Online performances and virtual artistic programs were gaining popularity with artists and cultural institutions prior to the pandemic. However, now more than ever, the virtual forum has become an essential tool for engaging audiences. From impromptu works captured by a smartphone and shared through social media to works that are scripted, choreographed, and produced by professional companies, a wide range of new content has emerged.

The following considerations are intended to help artists and organizations navigate the quickly evolving landscape of virtual content, digital engagement, and distance learning. These considerations may benefit the planning, production, and sharing phases of your goals for engaging audiences online. Centered on a series of questions, considerations include links to related resources.

What are the main goals for the content you wish to create?

Common goals are:

- Engaging existing and new audience members and supporters
- Preserving cultural traditions
- Educating the general public about a specific art form or discipline
- Providing instruction for an artistic or creative practice
- Raising money or garnering new sponsors and funders
- Building awareness about the work of your organization, including featured artists, collections, and performances
- Advertising for future events or programs, attracting new people to your organization's physical location
- Providing entertainment

If you represent an arts or cultural organization, you will want to ensure that your digital content is aligned with your organization's mission, strategic plan, branding, and messaging. Consider how the content could be viewed and shared globally, leading to broader interest and support for your organization or your creative work.

- [Creative Capital](#) – *Thinking About Livestreaming as an Artist? Read This First*
- [Oklahoma Arts Council](#) – *Operating During COVID-19: Considerations for Oklahoma Nonprofit Arts Organizations*
- [Oklahoma Center for Nonprofits](#) – *Best Practices and Considerations for Nonprofit Re-engagement*
- [Pew Research Center](#) – *Arts Organizations and Digital Technologies*
- [Quuu](#) – *6 Ways to Use Live Streaming to Reach Your Audience*
- [Vimeo](#) – *How to Plan a Virtual Event*

The Digital Divide

Pivoting programs to online platforms raises questions about the inequity that exists among those who have internet service and access to online content, and those who do not. This digital divide often leaves arts education and arts programming consumption limited to communities that already have reliable access to arts experiences. As you increase your online programming, we encourage you to consider these implications, remaining mindful of finding ways to serve all Oklahomans through the arts.

What possibilities exist for artistic online content?

When it comes to the arts and cultural sector, the creative possibilities for online content and digital engagement are endless. Following are examples of arts experiences available through digital engagement.

- **Artist Talks and Interviews**
 - [Harvard Library](#) – lectures and interviews about contemporary art
 - [Tate Talks](#) – long-form discussions about art with the world’s leading artists and speakers
- **Demonstrations**
 - [Artists Network](#) – visual art demonstrations
- **Distance Learning (Youth)**
 - [ahha Tulsa](#) (Arts and Humanities Council of Tulsa) – *Distance Learning Arts Education Resources*
 - [Arts Council OKC](#) – All Access Arts Online
 - [Oklahoma Arts Council](#) – *Teaching With Capitol Art*
 - [Oklahoma State Department of Education](#) – *Fine Arts Resources for Distance Learning*
 - [Playbill](#) – theatre-related online resources for kids and families
- **Distance Learning (Adults/All Ages)**
 - [Creative Blog](#) – online art classes
 - [Dance Magazine](#) – Boston Conservatory at Berklee Commercial Dance Intensive
- **Museum or Gallery Tours**
 - [Museum of Modern Art](#) – MoMA Learning
 - [Oklahoma Museums Association](#) – #MuseumsFromHome
 - [Smithsonian](#) – *Ten Museums You Can Virtually Visit*
- **Online Meetings/Training and Webinars**
 - [Beth’s Blog](#) – *Running Effective Virtual Nonprofit Meetings*
 - [HowlRound Theatre Commons](#) – *Ways of Gathering in the Age of COVID-19*
- **Performances (Music/Theatre/Dance/Spoken Word/Poetry)**
 - [Filmed On Stage](#) – offers a selection of free plays and musicals
 - [Goodnet](#) – *5 Incredibly Inspiring Pieces of Spoken Word Poetry*
 - [NPR](#) – *A List Of Live Virtual Concerts To Watch During The Coronavirus Shutdown*
 - [ReelAbilities Film Festival](#) – dedicated to promoting awareness and appreciation of the lives, stories and artistic expressions of people with different disabilities
 - [The Christian Science Monitor](#) – *Live from anywhere: Musicians find new ways to connect with fans*
 - [Tulsa Ballet](#) – live stream schedule
- **Public Art Self-Guided Tours**
 - [Denver Public Art](#) – Self-Guided and Virtual Tools
 - [Downtown Oklahoma City Partnership](#) – public art map
 - [The Avenue Concept](#) – self-guided public art tours in Providence, Rhode Island

Who is the audience that you intend to reach?

While online content is widely accessible and appealing to a large audience, designing online creative work for a specific audience is also an option. If content is developed for a specific age group or demographic, it's necessary to include that information in the description or at the beginning of the forum. For example, works that have strong adult themes should include a parental advisory statement.

- [Forbes](#) – *Steps to Identify Your Target Market*
- [Inc.](#) – *How to Define Your Target Market*
- [Oklahoma State Department of Education](#) – Oklahoma Academic Standards for Fine Arts
- [Safekids.com](#) – *Internet Safety By Age*
- [Socialbakers](#) – *Target Audience Analysis: Everything Digital Marketers Need to Know*
- [University of Michigan](#) – *An Introduction to Content Warnings and Trigger Warnings*

What is the projected lifespan of the virtual content you are interested in producing?

Determine whether the virtual content will be a singular product or if you wish to produce an ongoing series of programs. If you intend to archive the works, you will need to have a plan for that additional process.

- [Library of Congress](#) – *Web Archiving and Preserving the Performing Arts in the Digital Age*
- [VMG Studios](#) – *Pre-Recorded Content vs. Live-Streaming for Virtual Events*

How much money should you budget for the virtual content production?

The expenses for your project will depend on the standards you determine for professional quality and long-term goals. Consider the following expenses when planning for your project.

- AV/Tech (equipment, technology, internet services, software, broadcasting)
- Artist fees and licensing (NOTE: The Oklahoma Arts Council advocates for fair compensation of artists for their professional services.)
- Marketing (social media ads, email newsletters, and other campaigns to build awareness about the virtual content)
- Professional services (videographers, editors, American Sign Language interpreters)
- Properties and supplies (art supplies for an online art class/demonstration, costumes for an online theater performance)
- Preservation and archival requirements
 - [The Production Community](#) – *Master Series: Your Guide to Intelligent Production*
 - [Livestream](#) – *Live Streaming Budgeting Guide*

Will you earn any direct revenue from the virtual content you produce?

Possible income revenues include private donors and online consumers. By setting up a paywall for your virtual content, you can limit accessibility to paying patrons. You may also choose to allow artists to feature their own personal payment accounts such as Venmo, Cash App, or Paypal to support the content.

What measures will you take to ensure your virtual content is accessible to a broader demographic?

As you make content available for virtual platforms, consider whether the content is accessible or adaptable to people with disabilities. People with disabilities represent a large, diverse population of your audience and as such they should have equitable access to virtual programming. Accessibility ensures that virtual programming is made accessible by providing effective communication through accommodation like sign language interpretation, captioning, audio/visual description, and tactile opportunities.

- [National Endowment for the Arts](#) – *Resources to Help Ensure Accessibility of Your Virtual Events for People with Disabilities*
- [NewView Oklahoma](#) – offers resources to help organizations provide accessible opportunities to individuals who are blind or visually impaired
- [Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped](#) – offers resources to help organizations provide accessible opportunities to individuals who are blind or visually impaired
- [Web Fundamentals](#) – a guide to help organizations make their websites accessible and usable for everyone

How will you incorporate the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion into your virtual content?

Ensuring that your virtual content features artists from diverse cultural ethnicities, age demographics, and communities will expand the relevance of your organization's work. Consider the reality that artists of color and women artists receive fewer opportunities to exhibit their talents in the traditional exhibit spaces and performance venues. By placing diversity, equity, and inclusion at the forefront of your planning process, you will open up opportunities to share a broader spectrum of artistic practices, amplify diverse voices, engage with new audiences, and open up dialogue that fosters cultural understanding. A key feature of equitable virtual content is the understanding that people come from different experiences, and these experiences are tied to their social identities (i.e. race, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, etc.) In the virtual environment, there are ways that you can incorporate that acknowledgement into your virtual content. Consider integrating culturally relevant materials, collaborate with someone from different experiences, and be aware of how the current situation is impacting different communities.

- [San Diego State University](#) – *Maintaining Equity and Inclusion in Virtual Learning Environments*

Do you need to include acknowledgements in your virtual content?

Acknowledgments allow you to give credit to anyone who helped support the work, including financial sponsors, in-kind donors, film professionals, tech support, content creators, and participating artists. Prior to the creation of your online program, consider ensuring an agreement is in place for how sponsors and contributors will be credited. If you intend to include logos in the credits, ensure that you have permission to do so and have access to the most current logo. Acknowledgements are often incorporated into the opening or closing sections of the online presentation. The descriptive narrative is another place you may want to acknowledge individuals, artists, businesses, and donors who made the production possible.

- [ViaSport British Columbia](#) – *10 ways to start engaging your sponsors and partners via social media*

How will you sustain a connection with your virtual content viewers?

Include contact information in the presentation so that new audience members know how to contact you or follow you for future programming. Contact information should be simple and easy for viewers to remember. A website, email address, or social media handle or hashtag.

- [ArtBusiness.com](#) – *Artist Websites: How to Increase Your Online Traffic and Keep Everyone on Your Site Longer*
- [Artsy](#) – *10 Tips to Sharpen Your Gallery's Digital Strategy in 2020*
- [Artwork Archive](#) – *How to Grow Your Online Audience for your Art Business*
- [MTM London](#) – *Digital audiences: Engagement with arts and culture online*
- [Science Direct](#) – *From arts marketing to audience enrichment: How digital engagement can deepen and democratize artistic exchange with audiences*
- [The Digital Engagement Framework](#) – *Digital Engagement in Culture, Heritage, and the Arts*

How will you protect the intellectual property you are creating and sharing?

Sharing work online can put you or your organization at risk of having your work appropriated, reproduced, miscredited, or stolen. By including a procedure for copywriting into your digital engagement plan, you can help protect your work, your organization, and the artists who are contributing to the online program.

- [Artists Rights Society](#) – protecting intellectual property rights
- [Sarah Hawkins, Attorney at Law](#) – *Legal Ins and Outs of Livestreaming in Public*
- [Stanford University Library](#) – *Copywrite & Fair Use: The Basics of Getting Permission*
- [Switcher Studio](#) – *Copyright Rules for Facebook Live Video: How Not to Get Flagged*