

Introduction

Before we start, we want to clarify what type of art project this information covers. Although there are many different displays and works of art which are considered public or community art projects, this information specifically covers public art projects using prefabricated paintable fiberglass animals and sculptures embellished by local artists.

There are many reasons and benefits to putting on a public art project in your community. Many projects start as a way to raise needed funds to service a need in the community, and there are numerous examples of these projects raising 1000's, 10's of thousands and even 100's of thousands of dollars for worthy causes. Some start as a way to revitalize an area and bring attention and tourism. Some start with the idea to showcase local artists' work and bring awareness to artists who may not otherwise get their work out into the public eye. No matter what the reason is to pursue a public art project like this, the potential benefits to the organizations, community, businesses, artists, and people involved are significant.

A successful public art project featuring paintable 3D forms by local artists must first start with a plan. Without a plan, the project will be unfocused and not produce the intended results. It may also jeopardize future projects within the community and result in lackluster participation from key members and contributors in the community, businesses, arts, and non-profit organizations.

About Us

We at Icon Poly have been partners in many fundraising art projects throughout the world. For the past 15 plus years, we have helped raise millions for local and national non-profits, brought attention to areas in need, helped local artists break out and get noticed, and created tourism in areas that have never before had it. Throughout this journey, we have learned a lot during our involvement in these varied projects and have compiled a list that will help you plan and execute a successful project. This guideline is by no means 100% complete, nor can we offer a guarantee of success, but what it will do is cause you to think about and address the details that need to be addressed for a successful public art project.

Project Organization

You will need to divide up the work to be done. You can use committees, task groups, teams, or whichever you like and what will work in your community or organization. Whichever organizational structure you choose, it must have an Executive Group that has the final decision making authority with a top tier person that can make a final decision in case the committee comes to a stalemate. Relying on an entire group to come to a unanimous agreement on all decisions will dramatically slow down the process and the whole project.

The following is an example of an organizational structure that you can follow to organize your community art project.

As you layout your project organization structure, you will need to include some essential elements all projects should have.

Executive:

Provides final decision-making authority and is primarily responsible for the overall direction of the project and ensures all elements of the project come together to produce the intended results.

Planning and Administration:

Provides leadership and guidance for the project. Sets goals and objectives. Establishes the preliminary project budget. Promotes the positive benefits of the project throughout the community. Identifies the key people within the community that should be recruited to serve in strategic roles (marketing, artists, sponsorship, etc.) within the project. Proper planning at the opening stages of a project will ensure a harmonious and fun execution of the tasks by and through subordinate groups.

Marketing:

Provides the professional insight and development of a marketing plan for the project. A marketing professional with strong social media skills or connections recruited from the local community should be your choice to lead this group. They will know what works in the local markets and may have insight on a national level as well through professional contacts. Group members should include members of the local media or have strong ties to it if possible. Some specific tasks that this committee will be responsible for include:

- Marketing Plan (local, regional, and national coverage).
- Identify who or what agency will do the work and submit a budget.
- Manage the day to day issues that arise during plan execution.
- Identify, plan and execute the media campaign; Use Advertising, Newspaper, Radio, TV, Social Media and other outlets available to reach the public.
- Work with other established community groups like Travel and Tourism, The Chamber of Commerce, Historical Societies, Service Groups, etc. to promote the project.

Sponsorship:

This group sells the project to the community through sponsorships from local businesses, individuals, families, civic organizations, service groups, professional associations, etc. Their key tasks include:

- Identify and document the list of individuals, companies, groups and organizations that will get targeted for sponsorships.
- Develop a sponsorship package with assistance from the marketing committee.
- Make individual sales calls to prospects and chart results for follow-up.
- Manage the process to ensure all prospects get contacted and re-contacted so the highest participation rate is secured. Spread out tasks between effective members and be prepared to re-contact prospects that have not committed after the first contact.

Events & Promotion:

This group plans and executes the social and promotional events for the project. Some of their key tasks may include:

- Organize and execute various parties and gatherings; Kick-Off Party, Press and Media Luncheons, Sponsor Party, Artist Workshop, etc.
- Organize and execute the auction event (if the icons will get auctioned) and associated supporting events. Target affluent members of the community to attend to realize the greatest net proceeds from the auction.
- Work closely with marketing to ensure the design, theme, and other characteristics of the project flow smoothly through all events and promotions.
- Coordinate coverage of these events and promotions through the public relations group to ensure complete local media coverage.
- Be responsible for creating and maintaining the project mailing list and the distribution of literature through direct mail, e-mail, website campaigns or another type of distribution media.

Artist:

Responsible for the identification and qualification of local area artists who will be recruited and selected to participate in the project. Some duties of this group include:

- Establish the criteria that will get used for qualifying artists.
- Identify and create a target list of artists to get recruited to participate.
- Determine the level of compensation, stipend, or honorarium to be paid to each artist.
- Make individual contact with the targeted artist to recruit them.
- Determine the criteria for the artists to follow.
- Approve and Disapprove artist submissions and make awards in a timely manner
- Work with artists throughout the project to facilitate the successful completion of their work in conjunction with the sponsors and flow of the overall project.

Merchandising:

Develops practical and effective merchandising programs for the project. Some key tasks include:

- Develop merchandising plan and ideas including a selection of items to be merchandised and ensuring the project theme gets carried through.
- Work with manufacturers to produce the items to be merchandised and possibly recruit them as sponsors.
- Develop a licensing program if needed or desired.

Public Relations:

This committee is the liaison between the project support groups and the local, regional and national media. A media professional should get considered to head this committee. PR activities include:

- Write press releases and distribute them to all media outlets.
- Organize public relations events and coverage for the other committees and projects.

Logistics:

This is one of the commonly overlooked committees and one of the most important. Vehicles and workforce will be needed to move the art icons around. Most of the pieces are not very heavy but most tend to be somewhat awkward. This committee provides logistical support throughout the project. Key responsibilities include:

- Manage the receipt and safe storage of the art icons during and after getting delivered.
- Work with the art committee to identify the delivery points and recipients of the icons.
- Be the liaison with the community to place the finished art objects in highly visible or sponsor locations.
- Log the location of each icon and work with the marketing group to create a tourist map with the locations of each icon.
- Work with the manufacturer to install the icons in a safe and effective manner.
- Work with an individual, group or the manufacturer to provide repairs in the case of vandalism or accidental damage.

Summary

Your project may not need all of these elements individually, and each aspect can be part of a person's responsibility. It all depends on the size and goals of your community or organization. However, you must ensure that all of the key elements of your project are defined, planned, and executed to ensure your project is a success. Remember, you get one chance to do it right. Do the best you can and learn what you need to improve upon for your next project.

We at Icon Poly can give you guidance, direction, and ideas and put you in touch with people across the country who have run many different successful projects which would be glad to help answer your questions. We can also provide you with your icon of choice, whether it is oversized, life-sized, or miniature to be used as your 3D canvas. We also provided services for identification and recognition plaques for the icons.

Our priority at Icon Poly is to help you have a successful project. If you have additional questions or would like to discuss your project specifics, please give us a call or e-mail and ask for Daniele, Kylee, or Kyle.

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Selecting an Icon

Selecting an icon for your project could mean the difference between a rewarding project experience and a bad experience. Many things should be taken into consideration when selecting your icon. We have outlined some of the things which you should consider when selecting the 3D canvas for your public art project.

Representative of your area or organization

Your icon should be a likeness of something your city, area, or organization is known for. If you have a sports team in your area, it could be a mascot of that team. If your community lies in an agricultural area, perhaps an oversized representation of the type of crop produced in your area. If your area is known for a particular animal, a life-sized, oversized, or miniature likeness of that animal may be a good choice. If your area was known for something produced or manufactured, a representation of that might make a good icon. If your organization has a recognizable logo, that may be a good choice.

Icon Development

Anything can be made, but will it be feasible? Very large and very detailed icons are not good choices. They can be done, but development time and cost goes up with size and detail. The trend seems to be going with smaller icons in the 48 inch or less range on the longest or tallest dimension, and if it is determined more height is desired, they can be mounted on elevating bases that complement the pieces.

Development Cost

In most cases the icon you want to use for your community art project will not exist and will have to be developed and molded before a number of them can be produced. The best way to find out the development costs is to consult with a person with the company you choose to make your icons. All companies have their systems and pricing structures for development and molding and do range between \$0 by some companies and more than \$10,000 by other companies and tend to be dependent on the size of the icon, if the company already has a mold of the icon and the quantity you anticipate ordering.

3D Canvas Area and Continuity

The 3D icon you choose is to provide the artists with inspiration and a starting point for their designs. It is a good idea to have enough continuous flowing 3d canvas for them to represent their artwork fully. For instance, a large oyster shell allows for enough continuous area for most artists' vision, but a spider with long skinny legs will be difficult for artists to work with. Appendages like wings, extended arms, antennas, etc. can also be a problem. These should get discussed with your sculpture manufacturer, so all the pros and cons are understood.

After Delivery Logistics

Your icons will need to be moved around from time to time. Ease of movement should be considered when selecting your icon. Also, moving them around increases the chances of accidental damage — the fewer appendages protruding from the icons, the less opportunity for something to get damaged. Close attention should be given to the dimensions of your icon. The shape and dimensions will have a big impact on the ability to move the icons around and through doors, hallways, and corridors.

Icon Size

The size of the 3D paintable fiberglass animal or shape you choose for your public art project pretty much boils down to what you want to accomplish with your art project. There are advantages to both large and small icons; however, the trend does seem to be heading in the direction of icons 48” tall or less and no wider than 32”. As we talk to project committees, the thoughts behind this are the smaller icons cost less, which can translate into more net funds raised and allows more people and sponsors to participate in the art project. They are much easier to move around to media events and promotions, and they provide enough surface area for artists but are not too overwhelming. Thirty-two inches wide or less will fit through most normal doors, so no special facilities are needed for storage, and many artists may not have spaces for sculptures that will not fit through standard door openings.

Per Piece Cost

Most fiberglass animals, shapes, and sculptures used for community art projects range in cost from 300 to 2000 dollars each, depending on size, quantity, and surface area. All companies have a little different pricing structure, so contacting the manufacturers you would like to work with will give you a better idea of the actual cost of the specific sculpture you would like to use.

Selecting an Icon Supplier

When choosing a company to provide the icons for your community art project, there are a few things you should look for and some guidelines you should take into consideration. Below is a list of things we consider to be the most important criteria you should consider when selecting a supplier. You may find your program has different criteria, but these should be considered at some time in your planning process:

1. Avoid using a supplier who does not directly control the manufacturing process of the icons. If they don't own the manufacturing facility where the icons are made your quality and service will suffer considerably. There are companies out there who do not actually make the icons. In fact some have no facility at all and rely on outsourcing the making of the pieces to a manufacturer who will give them the cheapest price to make your icons. Some will not disclose this to you so you should ask many questions and be thorough to get the truth.
2. Check them out. Do a simple google search of the name of the company. It is also essential to search the name of the people who own the company as dishonest people can hide behind a company name. It is incredible what you can find on google. Check the companies BBB rating. Ask for a list of references and make sure to call them. Search the internet for other public art projects and contact them to see who manufactured their icons and then check that company out. We can't stress how important it is to check out the icon supplier to make sure that they not only have the ability and facilities to make all the icons for your project but are trustworthy. There have been numerous cases where projects have put out a considerable amount of money only to find out the company or individual they hired could not or did not produce their icons.
3. Price, of course, is important but don't make it the primary factor. If getting several bids, you will likely get a wide range of prices. Many things will affect the prices you get, like whether you are getting prices direct from the manufacturer or from a company that does not actually make the sculptures. The materials used, the efficiency of the manufacturing process, the quality of the product you will receive, and the quality and extent of the customer service you receive can all affect pricing. Keep in mind these pieces are still made one at a time in a custom manufacturing facility, and all manufacturers have developed their own proprietary processes, which will make different companies' prices vary. We have seen over time how important customer service is in this industry. You will have many questions come up during a multi-month or year-long project, so make sure the company you choose will be there when you need them.

4. A written agreement signed by both you and the manufacturer. The agreement should cover all charges; Development, molding, your icons, and shipping, as well as payment structure and terms, the approval process, timeline and delivery schedules, and any additional terms or conditions you feel is important to you. If a company will not do a written agreement, you probably should not use them.
5. Customer service is essential during the life of your project. When checking out possible manufacturers, be sure to find out the level of customer service they will offer. Do they support you after the icons are delivered? Do they provide direct support to the icon artists? If you have vandalism or damage, will they come to your location and help you fix those issues? If not, will they help remotely fix those issues? Will a rep of the company actually come to your location and speak with the artists?
6. Delivery of icons is often overlooked but is an important factor that can cause considerable stress if not handled correctly. Some companies will delivery the icons on their own vehicles, and some will load them on over the road freight trucks and send them. If possible, you should select a company that delivers the icons themselves and carries arts insurance, this will reassure you that the icons will make it to you in good condition. When they get shipped on freight trucks, icons will have to be crated, which is an additional cost, then you will have a bunch of crate materials to get rid of, let alone the time you will spend taking them out of the crates. Freight trucks also have a higher damage rate than company delivered icons.
7. Payment terms for most respectable manufacturers will generally be 50% deposit at the time the order is placed and the balance 50% due when the icons get shipped or 33.3% at the time of order, 33.3% at a midway approval process and 33.3% at the time of shipment. Most quality manufacturers will also take multiple forms of payments, including credit cards, check, wire transfer, and online payment sources like PayPal or Stripe. If a manufacturer has the terms of 100% of the cost upfront or even asks you to pay the entire bill upfront, be very wary. More than likely, that manufacturer is not established and or trustworthy.
8. If we were to hire a manufacturer, here is what our guidelines would be. They would have a quality website and other web presence, and they would answer the telephone when we call or return calls promptly, they would have an actual manufacturing facility, they would answer all our questions about doing an art project with no obligation upfront, they would execute a written agreement, they would have payment terms of 50% dep. and 50% at shipment, they would have an "A" BBB rating, they would provide references and check out, the company and the owners would have a clean Google search, or since the internet is a nasty place they should be able to explain any negatives that show up, they have experience servicing the industry and they would deliver the sculptures to us and provide customer service and direct support to our artists.

Public Art Project Flow

Most projects will follow the same basic flow. This guide only includes the major steps. Media events and promotions should be inserted whenever possible. This is just a basic guide and all opportunities to propel the project in a positive direction should be explored even if the flow may need to be altered.

1. Do research and obtain information about putting on a project.
2. Form a steering committee or put a person in charge of developing and obtaining icons for your project.
3. Contact manufactures to gain information on icon development.
4. Decide on an icon and get an accurate quote for the per piece price and shipping charges from the manufacturer of choice.
5. Work with the manufacturer to develop a prototype icon of your approval.
6. Start a grassroots promotional campaign to get a pulse of possible project sponsors and recruit more volunteers to help.
7. Put out a call to artists for artists to submit designs.
8. Unleash your forces to start obtaining sponsors.
9. Start working with local vendors and your icon manufacturer to develop other merchandise to increase exposure and revenues.
10. Get an estimate of the total icons needed for your project and place an order with the manufacturer.
11. Keep selling sponsorships, approving artists submissions and planning your media events.
12. Take delivery of your icons.
13. Distribute the icons to the sponsors or artists.
14. While artists and sponsors are embellishing their icons, keep pumping the media promotions.
15. Unveil the icons and put them on display to the public.
16. Keep promotions running while the icons are on display.
17. Start planning and promoting your final event.
18. Have your final event to sell your icons and other merchandise.
19. Continue selling support merchandise and publish results and recognitions.

Support Merchandise

Many ideas to increase project revenues are being used in different communities across the country. Below are some of the more common ideas others have implemented to generate additional funds.

Small Icons

These are close representations of your large icon only at a size of 12 to 18 inches tall. These can be sold to the public throughout the program, the schools can use them for art classes to paint, and they can be done by artists as a companion piece and presented to the sponsors or sold at auction.

Miniature Icons

These are close representations of your icon only in a size from 6 to 9 inches and can be used in the same manner as the small icons.

Pencil Sketches and Prints

Pencil sketches of the original 2D designs are reproduced as prints and sold in gift shops, tourist visited locations and at the auction event.

Post Cards

Packages of postcards with the icon pictures can be sold throughout the community in stores and sponsor locations.

Coffee Table Books

New technology has made it easy and affordable to produce books with the design of your community art project. These can be sold to the public and even work at artist events as autograph opportunities.

Posters

Posters with all the designs of your art project can be produced very inexpensively and can even be framed and displayed as prints. These have been used many times very successfully.

Hats and Shirts

These are usually good sellers for most projects and normally easily obtainable locally.

Now, almost anything can be printed or engraved with your logo on it. From Yeti cups to key chains. Use your imagination and use local vendors when possible, it will encourage them to get more involved in your project.

Sample Time Line

When putting on a public art project with paintable fiberglass animals or sculptures time can easily be miss judged which will put stress on the project and all involved. When establishing your time lines be sure to remember the entire project is made of a bunch of individual time-consuming processes. Following is an example of a timeline you can use as a guideline.

Work in reverse to establish your timeline.

May 1st - Your Icons will go on display to the public.

If you want your icons to go on display the 1st of May, you should allow your artists and clear coater 6 to 8 weeks to complete the artwork and seal it for outdoor display. So, you should take the delivery of your icons around the 6th of March to the 20th of March.

March 6th- March 20th Your manufacturer delivers your icons.

To allow enough time for manufacturing and delivery, you should allow 6 to 12 weeks from the time you place your order with the manufacturer. This time frame depends on if your sculpture is made from a stock mold or a custom piece made just for you. It also depends on the workload of the manufacturer and the promptness of the reviews and approvals.

Dec. 27th - Feb. 7th - An order is placed with the manufacturer.

Many things can affect the time it takes to put on a community art project. You can save time by using simple ideas and making solid decisions. Manufacturing time will also change with the number of icons you order and the volume of orders your manufacturer is dealing with. Be sure to communicate with your manufacturer as you set up your timelines and delivery schedules.

Questions and Answers

In full transparency the answers to these questions are from our point of view here at Icon Poly. We are a sculpture manufacturer who has been serving the paintable fiberglass sculpture market for over 15 years. Other companies may have different points of view than ours but these are questions we get asked on an on going basis and our standard answers to them.

Q. Should we use a stock mold icon or have a custom one developed for us?

A. Even though it can take longer, we recommend developing your own custom icon. Custom icons tend to bring more than stock items. You will also have the originality factor since your sculpture has not been used by other communities.

Q. Can you develop our icon for us from scratch or do we have to have a sculptor do it?

A. Icon Poly can make your icon from concept to finish from your ideas. If you have a local sculptor who wants to do the original model, we can work with that as well.

Q. What is the process of developing our icon?

A. After getting your ideas on design and size we will make a digital 3d model in a computer. Upon approval of that model we will size it, export it into a format we can use and do the physical creation of the model using 3D milling machines, 3D printers, and 3D hot wire foam cutters along with manual sculpting.

Q. How much will it cost to develop our icon and make a mold?

A. The development cost ranges depending on size, detail, and how many icons you are ordering. With Icon Poly, if you purchase 25 or more, we do all the development at no charge to you, you will only pay the per piece price for the sculptures. If you order less than 25 pieces, the cost for development will typically range between \$2800 and \$8400 depending on size and detail.

Q. How much will the icons cost us?

A. There are many variables but at Icon Poly, all our per piece prices of icons are based on the surface area of the sculpture. Usually, icons will cost from \$350 to \$2000 each. Size detail and quantity purchased will make a lot of difference. Paintable fiberglass animals 3 to 4.5 feet tall and 2 to 3 feet wide will range from \$500 to \$700 each. Fiberglass sculptures 5 feet tall and taller and 3 feet wide or wider will range between \$800 and \$2000 each. At Icon Poly, we have designers who will be happy to work with you to understand how pricing is affected by surface area help you decide on the best design to fit your budget.

Q. What does it cost to ship the icons to us?

A. With smaller icons of 24 inches tall and 12 inches wide or close to that can be shipped by standard ground services and will range between \$50 and \$100 each. For larger icons, the cost can range between \$200 and \$400 each if sent on freight carrier. At Icon Poly, we have our own truck who will bring them direct to you and is normally more economical if you order 10 or more sculptures. Our rates are set by the mile one way from our facility to your location and fluctuate with fuel prices but normally range between \$1.85 and \$2.55 per mile for the truckload. (Ex: 1000 miles x 2.00 per mile = \$2000. If you have 25 icons on the truck, the cost per icon would be \$80 per piece.)

Q. How durable are the icons?

A. These icons are made with resin and fiberglass structural support and are quite durable and will resist most incidental damage but can be damaged with deliberate intentions. This is something you may plan for if your sculptures are to be on display 24 hours per day in public spaces.

Keep it Simple

Now, after learning what you need to put on a full-blown art project using paintable fiberglass animals or sculptures, we would like to share with you an emerging trend with these programs. There is a trend to simplify everything from the icons to the auction.

To sum it up it works like this.

1. Keep the size of the icon 60 inches tall by 32 inches wide or smaller.
2. Solicit sponsors who take care of the artwork themselves or hire an artist directly and handle the logistics of their own icon.
3. Have an auction in conjunction with another event or not have an auction at all.

The advantages of keeping it simple

- A. The smaller icons save on cost and logistics and allows participation by more sponsors and artists.
- B. The artist deals directly with the sponsor, so you don't have to have a committee just for that.
- C. By having the auction during an already existing event you save all the planning and promotion necessary for a stand-alone auction event. This is a lot less stressful, which results in more fun by everyone.

This is just a simple overview. Your public art project should be designed to fit your community, needs, and expectations.