

Community Poetry Concept Note

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A community poem is a participatory exercise done in collaboration with those attending a convening, whether it is virtual or in-person. The idea is to create art together, in the form of a poem, and bond around a certain piece/topic (e.g., photo, painting, book) through a shared experience. The rationale for using a community poem is the following: 1) to engage the audience and be inclusive of all the voices in attendance, 2) to stir critical thought around a topic of interest, and 3) to leverage alternate methods, such as art, to share, communicate, and express as a community.

A community poem is designed around **five major components** and can be implemented using the following process, if this is to be planned pre-convening.

A reactionary piece.

A thought-provoking art piece can be selected that relates to the convening's overall theme. This can be a photograph, a painting, a short video, etc. Ideally this piece would be visual, though it can also be another form of content, as long as there is alignment to the convening.

The audience's participation.

Prior to the convening, a selected segment of the audience, or all (depending on audience size and event design) should be contacted in advance with the chosen reactionary piece and asked to provide one, or two, lines in "poetic style" regarding their thoughts, feelings, and/or reactions about the piece. The number of lines provided should be weighed against the desired length of the poem and the size of the audience participating.

The compilation of lines into a poem.

Once all of the lines have been collected, an appointed person will compile the lines to create a poem that flows and is emblematic of the overall theme. The person should have the liberty to modify some words for flow and fit but should maintain the overall integrity of the lines.

Each contributor's name can be displayed next to the lines they shared (consent may be needed to attribute names to the lines displayed).

The presentation.

Once the poem has been created, and during the convening, it can be displayed and read aloud by an assigned person, and/or, when appropriate, each person who contributed to the poem can read their lines as they are presented in the poem.

The share back.

The poem, once presented live, can be distributed back the larger audience – as this would be their collaborative work, and intellectual property.