



BEFORE YOU APPLY



Image by Cultural Agent
Dave Loewenstein of the
Lawrence, KS, Field Office

INTERESTED IN BRINGING THE USDAC TO YOUR COMMUNITY?

HERE'S HOW TO START A USDAC OUTPOST!

A USDAC Outpost is a group of four or more individuals committed to enacting USDAC values in their community. Outposts may focus on learning, relationship-building, and/or taking action through USDAC National Actions and your own local value-aligned projects and campaigns.

**THIS TOOLKIT WILL GIVE YOU ALL THE INFORMATION
YOU NEED TO CREATE AN OUTPOST.**

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QUICKSTART GUIDE

STEP ONE: INTRODUCE THE USDAC. National Actions are the easiest way. Check the [Events page](#) of the USDAC Website to see what's coming up. If the time is right for something like the People's State of the Union or #RevolutionOfValues, inviting folks to take part is a fun, accessible way to get acquainted with the USDAC. If there's a USDAC [Regional Envoy](#) for your state, you can also contact that person about offering an introductory workshop. Or hold a Story Circle focusing on local cultural needs, using the instructions in the [Before You Apply Public Folder](#). Be sure to share the USDAC Working Agreements and Statement of Values, available as an appendix to this document.

STEP TWO: BRING TOGETHER POTENTIAL FOUNDING OUTPOST MEMBERS. You need four Citizen Artists to apply for an Outpost charter. Invite key people to [enlist as Citizen Artists](#) (if they haven't already!). You'll find a sample agenda for an Outpost founding meeting on pages 5 and 6 below. If you feel ready to apply for an Outpost Charter, go over the [application](#) together and discuss the responses you want to provide to the questions.

STEP THREE: APPLY FOR AN OUTPOST CHARTER. Complete the online [application](#). You'll be contacted within two weeks following your submission.

STEP FOUR: DOWNLOAD THE OUTPOST TOOLKIT. Once your charter has been granted, you'll want to use the resources in the Outposts Toolkit and other materials available to you in the Outposts Public Folder to plan, promote, and strengthen your Outpost.

TO DOWNLOAD OUTPOST MATERIALS

The Outpost materials mentioned here are available for download from the [Before You Apply Public Folder](#).

When you go to that link and find something you want to use, download it to your computer. Click on the document you want. If it's a PDF, when you click on the document, on the upper right of your screen, you'll see icons to print or to download. If it's a word or similar file, once you open it, under the File menu, you'll see "Download as," giving you all available options. Choose the one you want, then download to your computer.

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WHAT ARE OUTPOSTS?

A USDAC OUTPOST IS A GROUP OF FOUR OR MORE INDIVIDUALS COMMITTED TO ENACTING USDAC VALUES IN THEIR COMMUNITY. Outposts may focus on learning, relationship-building, and/or taking action through USDAC National Actions and your own local value-aligned projects and campaigns.

The USDAC provides each Outpost:

- A start-up toolkit with resources, information, and ideas to help you build involvement, such as discussion guides for structured local conversations that help to create a learning community. Plus, a small batch of USDAC swag!
- Support in taking part in USDAC National Actions such as the People's State of the Union.
- A listing on the USDAC website.
- Support from a Regional Envoy, Cultural Agent, or member of the Office of Instigation in formulating your plans.
- Regular online video calls connecting Outposts with each other and with experienced USDAC organizers.

In return, Outposts:

- Take part in USDAC National Actions in ways relevant to local needs and resources.
- Keep the USDAC informed of your activities so we can help promote them.
- Take part in video calls to stay connected with the USDAC network.

Once an Outpost has been active for at least 6 months, members can apply to take things to the next level by opening a Field Office. Field Offices don't need a physical office, just a core of local USDAC folks and allies. (You'll find a detailed description of Field Offices in the [Before You Apply Public Folder](#).) As local networks committed to ongoing organizing, they receive additional strategic assistance, opportunities to apply for funding, access to a suite of powerful digital organizing tools, support with documentation and storytelling, and more.



USDAC Regional Envoys and Office of Instigation at a learning retreat in New Mexico.

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INTRODUCE THE USDAC

If the USDAC isn't already well-known among people you want to involve, you'll want to create some type of introductory experience before launching your Outpost planning. Make it fun, interesting, and engaging in any of the following ways.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF A NATIONAL ACTION

if the USDAC has an upcoming National Action such as the [People's State of the Union \(PSOTU\)](#) or [#RevolutionOfValues](#) coming up, use it to bring people together and engage in creative action research to help shape your Outpost.

For example, in PSOTU, people gather in Story Circles to share stories from their own experience that reveal something of the state of our union. You can find detailed information in the [#PSOTU2017 Toolkit](#) in the [Before You Apply Public Folder](#). You can take part in this annual civic ritual, but tailor your prompt to fit your organizing aims. For example, ask people to "Tell a story about something you experienced that revealed the state of arts and culture in our community."

After sharing stories according to Story Circle instructions, each small group reflects on what is revealed by the body of stories. That's an opportunity for a good discussion on what needs to happen in your community and people's interest in being part of it. Plan a date for a follow-up potluck to talk more, or if there's real interest, go to Step Two and schedule a founding meeting.

USE STORY CIRCLES ANYTIME

You don't have to wait for a National Action to hold a Story Circle. Detailed general instructions are in the [Before You Apply Public Folder](#).

USE HI-LI ACTIVITIES

The [USDAC's HI-LI Database](#) describes high impact-low infrastructure projects that can be mounted easily

and at low cost. Pick one that suits your community and situation, and invite folks to take part. End the event with refreshments and a discussion that leads to setting up a founding meeting for a local Outpost.

The USDAC Super PAC Toolkit in the [Before You Apply Public Folder](#) also has many good ideas for HI-LI projects.



In the midst of this volatile election cycle, what kinds of participatory projects can activate people, reminding us what democracy actually looks like—both within and beyond electoral politics?

With the airwaves full of polarizing rhetoric, what creative public interventions can disrupt narratives of hate, uplifting love, connection, and equity?

USDAC Super PAC (Participatory Arts Coalition) will spur creative public participation leading up to and during the 2016 presidential election, inviting artists and allies to show the country how democracy is practiced. Anyone can join as an *ExtraSuperDelegate*, creating a *Super Public Act of Compassion* or *Super Participatory Act of Culture* that fosters dialogue and connection, activates civic agency, and encourages full democratic participation.

THIS TOOLKIT WILL GIVE YOU EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO TAKE PART.

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SCHEDULE A MEETING WITH SOMEONE FROM THE USDAC CORE TEAM

If you have a small group of collaborators but aren't sure where to start, we'd be glad to talk with you all to help you figure it out. If there's a [USDAC Regional Envoy](#) in your state, you may be able to schedule an in-person meeting. If not, someone from our Office of Instigation will be able to schedule a group video call to get acquainted and talk about possibilities. Contact us at hello@usdac.us and we'll be glad to help.

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HOLD A FOUNDING MEETING

This annotated agenda for a USDAC Outpost organizing meeting suggests a series of activities to help introduce people to the USDAC and the value of an Outpost, engaging them in co-creating it. Even if you've already applied for and received your Outpost charter, you may need to introduce new people to the concept and help them feel a connection. Or you may be further along and want to include less introductory material. Feel free to use what makes sense for your situation and adapt as needed.

When you invite people, be sure to share the basics: a one-page description of the USDAC appears on page 7 below, and on pages 8 and 9, the USDAC's Working Agreements and Statement of Values. Link them to the [Outpost page of the USDAC website](#) so they can read Outpost basics. "Holding Space Principles" in the [Before You Apply Public Folder](#) will help to ensure a good experience for all.

AGENDA: A USDAC OUTPOST FOR [YOUR COMMUNITY NAME HERE]

DATE/START & END TIME/LOCATION/RSVP INFORMATION GO HERE; WE'VE USED 7-9 PM.

AS PEOPLE ARRIVE: Invite each participant to create a unique USDAC title and write it on a name tag along with first and last names. Offer some fun suggestions: the Minister of Public Possibility; Street Art Czar; Secretary of Bedtime Stories....

7:00 PM WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS.

NOTE: We've found it works well to do a round of creative personal introductions, then show a USDAC short video to kick things off. The [2016 People's State of the Union](#) video works well. Creative introductions could be something like this: share your name, what you do, and the name of a song that says something about where you're coming from right now. Or tell people what your favorite heritage food is, and what you love about it. Keep introductions short by saying each individual has up to one minute (less if there's a big crowd).

7:20 PM OUTPOST INTRODUCTION AND Q&A.

NOTE: Explain why you decided to test the waters for a USDAC Outpost and respond to questions about what's involved.

7:35 PM WHAT NEEDS DOING?

NOTE: Focusing on the topics listed here will help you clarify need, purpose, and objectives. If your group isn't too large, we suggest giving people five to 10 minutes to free-write about these questions, then sharing and discussing them together. If there are more people than would make this manageable, divide them into groups of three to six, give them free-writing time, and ask each group to discuss, then return to the group of the whole and summarize main points.

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- Why does your community need a USDAC Outpost? What aspects of the USDAC and your community make it seem like a good idea to start an Outpost?
 - What is your sense of the most engaging and effective local projects that an Outpost could focus on in your community? What is most needed?
 - Who are your potential allies? Who is already working for cultural democracy locally? What would it take to engage them in a meaningful way?
 - What could you personally offer in terms of ideas, energy, skills, connections, etc.?

8:15 PM NEXT STEPS

NOTE: After summarizing and discussing people's responses during the previous agenda section, take stock. What emerged as priorities? If there's one clear priority, you can move to project planning. Download the [Project Planning Proposal Form](#) in the [Before You Apply Public Folder](#). Using it as a guide, facilitate a brief discussion the idea you chose: what are the important questions you need answered? What are the important considerations to keep in mind? After this general discussion, assign at least two people to carry out the research and planning needed to complete the Planning Proposal Form, and to share the results with everyone else by a specified deadline, with discussion to follow at your next meeting.

If there's no clear consensus, have a general discussion of the top two or three ideas, and ask for working groups of two or more to volunteer to develop them further for presentation and consideration at the next meeting. If people actually volunteer to do this prep work prior to ideas being considered, that will give you an important reality-check. If no one offers to take part in one of the working groups, the idea in question doesn't have much juice and should be tabled.

8:30 PM NEXT MEETING and TASK REVIEW

Set a date for your next meeting far enough in advance to accomplish the work the group has taken on. Confirm people's tasks and deadlines: who will be on working groups, what are their deadlines, how will they share their work? If people have agreed to perform other tasks, such as reaching out to potential partners and allies, confirm their tasks and deadlines and how they will report back. Make sure everyone knows what they've agreed to do, when, and how.

9:00 PM CLOSING

It's important to end on time. If time is short, use a brief closing such as going around the circle and asking each person to share one word. If you have more time, try a creative closing such as learning and singing a song, or writing a collective poem using the ["Where I'm From" exercise](#), with each person taking one line.



ABOUT THE USDAC

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND CULTURE (USDAC) is a network of artists, activists, and allies inciting creativity and social imagination to shape a culture of equity, empathy, and belonging.

To create a just and welcoming world, all of us need social imagination, the capacity to envision and enact change. Yet as a society, we've failed to prioritize the programs and policies that cultivate creativity, empathy, and collaboration. Social institutions seldom allow us to show up as whole, creative humans. Too often, the stories we're asked to accept limit possibility, depicting us only as consumers and workers rather than creators and communicators.

Together, we can rewrite these stories. We affirm the right to culture and pursue cultural democracy that:

- welcomes each individual as a whole person
- values each community's heritage, contributions, and aspirations
- promotes caring, reciprocity, and open communication across all lines of difference
- dismantles all barriers to love and justice

To advance this vision, the nation's only people-powered department*:

- Engages everyone in weaving social fabric and strengthening communities through arts and culture
- Builds capacity and connective tissue among socially-engaged artists and cultural organizers
- Generates momentum and public will for creative policies and programs rooted in USDAC values
- Infuses social justice organizing with creativity and social imagination

Art and culture are powerful means of building

empathy, creating a sense of belonging, and activating the social imagination and civic agency necessary to make real change. When we feel seen, when we know that our stories and imaginations matter, we are more likely to bring our full creative selves to the work of social change. That not only makes our work more effective, we have more fun.

Our national actions invite everyone to perform a future infused with the transformative power of arts and culture. Our local organizing helps communities dream aloud and turn their dreams into reality. We connect people across regions in an ever-expanding creative learning community by sharing vital information, generating inspiring actions, and devising cultural policies and programs to catalyze a profound culture shift in the service of social and environmental justice. Together, we're creating new narratives of our power and possibility and scaling up strategies for equity and belonging.

The USDAC is not an outside agency coming in; it's our inside agency coming out! Radically inclusive and vibrantly playful, the USDAC offers pathways of engagement for any individual or organization eager to deepen a commitment to creativity and social change.

Culture shift is an all-hands-on-deck effort: whether you're already performing this work or new to creative organizing, join the people-powered department today!

THIS IS AN ACT OF COLLECTIVE IMAGINATION. ADD YOURS.

*The USDAC is not a government agency.

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APPENDIX: USDAC WORKING AGREEMENTS AND VALUES

For USDAC Office of Instigation, Cultural Agents, Field Offices, Regional Envoys, Bureaus, Outposts, and other USDAC collaborators. The USDAC is many things: a performance, an act of collective imagination, an experiment. Part of the experiment is to behave with each other with the same sensitivity, accountability, and collaborative spirit we envisage for the humane democratic communities we are trying to build. Even as we organize and execute toward impact, we bring a spirit of playfulness and joy to the endeavor. We're serious about the change we seek to bring about, but avoid taking ourselves too seriously. We all agree to accept and abide by the following working agreements.

ASK QUESTIONS

There are no stupid questions; all of us are free to ask for information, clarification, consideration whenever needed. We agree to ask questions before reaching decisions. We agree to communicate and ask for help when needed. We agree to familiarize ourselves with USDAC's aims, activities, and plans, so that we can understand and discuss our work in that context.

STAY RESPONSIVE

We work with fixed timeframes and deadlines; there is always a point where planning and decision-making end and implementation begins. In all communications, we will specify:

- (a) what we are seeking (e.g., awareness, response, ideas, objections, etc.);
- (b) a deadline for response;
- (a) modes of response (e.g., email, online discussion, etc.); and
- (c) clarification that non-response will be taken for consent to whatever is being proposed.

We understand that if we don't respond within specified timelines, our viewpoints may not be included. Not everyone needs to weigh in on everything; each of us can pick our priorities and trust the group to take care of the rest.

We agree to keep our USDAC colleagues apprised of our progress, submitting regular reports using the methods provided. We understand that we are accountable to

each other for fulfilling our responsibilities. If unforeseen circumstances prevent us from doing so, we agree to communicate in advance and help find another way to complete the task.

RESPECT PERSPECTIVES

We are a diverse group comprising individuals who see things in different ways. We agree to do our best to see issues from multiple perspectives rather than holding fixed positions. We agree to see our fellow USDAC activists as allies and to value all input, treating everyone with equal respect.

HOLD VISION

While we work with many specific details, we agree to stay in touch with our vision and do our best to see the big picture.

REPRESENT THE USDAC

The USDAC has many opportunities to share our vision and message through social media, press, and public events. Everyone is free to take part in this within a framework that ensures a consistent message: we agree to keep USDAC leadership apprised of press opportunities and collaborate on our public statements. While media representatives may inquire about our own individual work and affiliations (and each of us is free to provide that information), we agree to keep the USDAC's work front and center in media opportunities.

The USDAC's success depends on our ability to tell compelling stories of our work on the ground. We agree

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to enlist fellow activists and artists in documenting our process, and to share that documentation with our colleagues.

COMMUNICATE DIRECTLY

If issues arise between us, we agree to communicate directly or use the power of the group to constructively raise and resolve them, rather than triangulating.

RESPECT CONFIDENTIALITY

We are free to share USDAC materials for recruiting and briefing purposes, and to talk about USDAC conversations in general terms (e.g., “we shared several different opinions about X...”). But to maintain a culture of safety and openness for our work together, none of us will share recordings of strategic discussions or learning opportunities, or quote each other’s contributions to such discussions directly by name or other identifier without express permission.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

The USDAC is founded on the principles of cultural democracy: pluralism, participation, and equity. We cannot endorse or permit invidious prejudice to contaminate our work: actions or speech that discriminate against or insult any group on account of race, ethnicity, religion, orientation, ability, or other such characteristics will be grounds for cancellation of an Outpost’s or Field Office’s charter and expulsion from the USDAC for Cultural Agents, Regional Envoys, and others.

NON-VIOLENCE

The USDAC’s work is grounded in constructive, creative action. We cannot endorse or permit violent acts or speech to contaminate our work: actions or speech that threaten the physical well-being of others will be grounds for cancellation of an Outpost’s or Field Office’s charter and expulsion from the USDAC for Cultural Agents, Regional Envoys, and others.

USDAC STATEMENT OF VALUES

We hold these truths to be self-evident:

Culture is a human right. As expressed in the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, “Everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community.” It is our sacred duty to remove impediments to the exercise of this right and to ensure that the means to exercise this right are available to all. In a cultural democracy, we are obliged to monitor the impact of public and private actions with these duties in mind.

Culture is created by everyone. The art, customs, creative expressions, and social fabric of every community and heritage contribute to the vibrancy and dynamism of our common culture. Our cultural institutions and policies should reflect this, rather than privileging favorites.

Cultural pluralism is a social good and the wellspring of free expression. Its support and protection require equitable distribution of public resources, particularly to correct past injustices and balance an excess of commercialization.

Culture is the sum-total of public, private, individual, and collective action. We seek balance so that no sector dominates or controls cultural expression or access to cultural resources. We advocate an arts ecology in which all sectors work together to support cultural development for the benefit of all.

The work of artists is a powerful resource for community development, education, healthcare, protection of our commonwealth, and other democratic public purposes. Indeed, artists’ skills of observation, improvisation, innovation, resourcefulness, and creativity enhance all human activity. We advocate complete integration of arts-based learning in public and private education at all levels. We advocate public service employment for artists and other creative workers as a way to accomplish social good, address unemployment, and strengthen social fabric. We support artists who place their gifts at the service of community, equity, and social change.

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