Rebecca Cavalcante

Arts Programming Overview + Teaching Artist(s) Bio

Programming

Over the last 2 years I have focused on offering workshops and education sessions about how our local Metro budget works and how that money is spent, group court watch sessions, incarceration related data training, and how our criminal justice system works from police to jail to the court system. All of these areas are very data driven and so I used creative presentations and interactive elements to help participants visualize what is beyond the numbers. I also weaved in ways to engage metro government in demanding policy change, obtaining open records, finding public data, and using that data in creative ways to organize for changes they want to see in regard to the budget/incarceration/policing. These sessions have been geared towards adults. I have done these sessions mostly via zoom since 2020, with several community organizations including, but not limited to, Louisville Community Bail Fund, Black Lives Matter Louisville, Louisville Family Justice Advocates

Teaching Artist(s) Bios(s)

Rebecca Cavalcante is a Louisville native, mixed media artist, and community organizer. Working as a data curator and coordinator for Louisville Community Bail Fund, Rebecca creates trainings, workshops, and educational sessions that teach volunteers and community members the basics of incarceration related data and begin to unravel how the systems around us work through that data. It has been through creative exercises in these workshops and other community events that Rebecca began to see the potential in collectively creating mixed media visualizations as a teaching tool to engage communities in advocating for change.

With a focus on using art and data for social change Rebecca has 10 years experience as a grassroots community organizer around the intersection of racial justice, policing, and incarceration. Rebecca also spends time each year breaking down the city budget for community members and helping folks learn how to advocate for budget changes that help fund the needs of the community. She strives to cultivate creative, multi-generational spaces of community change making and collective knowledge building.

Artistic Content of Programming

For this program the base of the artistic content will be learning mixed media art techniques and data visualization (both as art and as graphics). While I will leave the parameters for materials wide open my focus to get us started will be using paint, spackle, magazines, and thread. We will use a base of wooden panels, or hoops and sticks for fiber pieces. From the bases we will work on earning the process of layering media and using what we find around us as materials. We will also have creative brainstorming exercises that will be used to help participants to pull out what symbolism and imagery they want to use as we work through a process to build a larger piece collectively.

The first few sessions will have creative brainstorming exercises that build from the data we are compiling and analyzing. The last few sessions will focus on creating the art piece/s as we continue to analyze data. The culmination of the program would be an event that debuts the art created as well as a summary presentation of what the group has learned.

My vision is that the group would create one art installation/piece over the allotted sessions, but that will ultimately be decided by the community participants and how they want to show the data they have compiled. Some participants could also choose to focus on creating digital visualizations or a zine for our summary and any social media the community center would want to use.

Educational Content of Programming

For this program I will work with the community center staff and/or the community participants to identify an issue they want to compile data around and present to the larger community or policy makers. Once we have identified a data question to answer we will begin to learn tools to compile data through open records, public data portals, and community data collection (which could include a survey or other data collection process if the group wanted). As we work to compile the data we will also map how that data may show up in budget spending, policy making, and other city operations. For this data collection and mapping we will use hands-on teaching techniques and group work to learn these tools together.

As we are collecting this data and mapping how it is used we will also identify places the community can engage Metro officials and stakeholders to push for change that would help fund what the community needs to thrive. We will learn the basics of Canva to create a summary of what we have pulled together along with any art installations the group creates. By the end of this programming participants will have a basic knowledge of how to find and request public data and use that data to advocate for change.

Issues that data could focus on may include, but are not limited to, housing, addiction, healthcare, food access, incarceration, policing, any issue that directly impacts your community most.

Process for hiring, training, and evaluating performance/effectiveness.

At the end of events or workshops I leave space for open feedback and input on the session and what folks need adjusted for the next session. If possible, I will do this as a group and write it down for everyone to see, if that is not possible, I offer a survey both virtually and on paper. Both as an artist and as a community organizer I have mentors and accountability relationships with directly impacted communities I work with. I regularly check in with these mentors and community partners about where I need to grow. I attend skill development workshops and learning spaces for social justice focused artists. The most important feedback I receive is from those that attend spaces I host so that feedback is always collected and weighed heavily in how I adjust my content.

How are participants of all backgrounds and abilities included in programming?

The most effective thing I do for this is to ask participants and the community center staff what accommodations would be needed and adjust to those. In general, I make sure I am mindful of how folks with physical and intellectual disabilities are able to interact with what I am offering. At the beginning of our first session, I like to work with participants and staff to create community agreements for the space so all can feel safe, seen, and valued in the space. Those community agreements are then read and posted for all meetings moving forward. All spaces I host are explicitly LGBTQ friendly and rooted in examining systematic oppression through the intersections of race, class, gender, and disabilities.

How do I engage teachers and community center staff before, during, and after programming?

Before the start of the program, I will meet with the community center staff and teachers to go over what their expectations, goals, and hopes are for the program. With that feedback I will adjust/create the curriculum and agenda for community sessions which would be shared with staff and teachers through the process for their input and feedback. I would also want to work with staff and teachers to narrow down the focus of what data issue/question we will be tackling. During sessions staff and teachers would be invited to take on pieces of facilitating or assisting if they wanted, or they could participate as a community member. Over the span of the residency I would check in with staff and teachers after each session so I can adjust anything needed for the next session.

For the culminating event at the end of the programming I will work with the staff and teachers to create an event that works best for that community. It is important to me that staff and community participants are involved in planning this end celebration of our time together. After the culminating event I would have a final meeting with staff and teachers to debrief the full program, find out if there are more action steps moving forward the community needs from me, and get feedback about my program for future offerings.

How do I engage participants in the creative and learning process?

I engage participants in the learning process through collaborative art projects, group data collection and analysis, lots of room for questions, and creative presentations with everything from videos to games to group exercises to artistic slideshows. I also make space for collective knowledge sharing, from me and from those in the room. I think it's important I have a base layer of education to present and to use different teaching tools to share. But it's equally important to leave room for the knowledge and lived experience everyone brings with them. I believe art brings people together to create and learn in unique ways, when in doubt I engage with something creative.

For this programming in particular I will use the data topic and data question we are trying to answer as an overarching example of how to collect and analyze data. During sessions participants will work together to put in open records requests themselves, research verified data and mine data from open data portals. Participants will also engage in the analysis as a group activity allowing room for everyone's lived experience to cultivate our collective lens we are looking through. Having everything hands on allows participants to not only engage in the learning process but also invest their time and energy into continuing that education.