



HIVE MIND

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HIVE: Building Structures That Really Work

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Key takeaways

Trust, but reinforce. Many arts organizations are built from the ground up by communities based on trust. It can feel strange to ask a team that feels like family, or a board of advisors that's done nothing but champion you, to formalize values and best practices. However, by weaving those principles into your organizational structure, you set yourselves up for long-term success.

Stay true to your purpose. If mission is at the center of your work. Let that purpose guide your decision-making about which model to use, who to partner with, and how to run your organization. Building out a full-fledged 501(c)3 doesn't work for everyone. That's okay. Choose the approach that serves your broader purpose.

Take care of your people. Burnout is a common struggle for artists who also serve as arts administrators. Take care of yourself and those around you. You can rotate duties, you can set expectations so that members who do not contribute will more quickly self-select out, and, if need be, you should not be afraid to let people go who are not helping the broader community thrive. Make deliberate choices, such as carving out time for team retreats that help everyone stay connected and focused on common goals.

Accept your failures. Everyone spoke about embracing failure. Allowing yourself to fail a little bit all the time, learning from each misstep, can prevent the rigor mortis that leads to massive failures down the road.

Embrace change. What works for you at this moment may not work forever. That is okay. Maintaining some degree of flexibility is crucial to weathering change. Whether it requires a single major shift, as exemplified by the Bureau of Fearless Ideas, constantly adjusting the structure to fit the group's needs, as SOIL Collective does, all organizations must change over time.

Notes

Attendees represented a variety of arts practices, including literature, performance, and visual arts. The majority (42 percent) are independent artists, with most others affiliated with a 501(c)3 or fiscally sponsored organization. Two-thirds said they would like to become either fiscally sponsored or 501(c)3 organizations within five years, while less than 13 percent said they hoped to remain independent in the same time frame.

