

Waterville Main Street

Becoming your own Umbrella

Waterville Creates!

Why

Even more than transformative creative work, getting to the underlying causes of organizational stress means asking for one's motivation to work with others: is it donor fatigue, efficiencies of scale, cross-promotional or programming opportunities, a desire to grow exponentially, or shrink strategically, change course...

Who

We began with the Colby Museum of Art, Waterville Opera House, Maine Film Center, Waterville Main Street, Common Street Arts, and the Waterville Public Library as organizations that had similar and complementary missions and programming, and were at a time of significant facility improvements and leadership change. The hospitals, colleges, city government, and regional funders came to the table because what we were trying to do met their recruitment needs. Are there likely and unlikely partners who are willing to think differently about what support looks like?

& Then

Who is it for? Are we as inclusive as we can be? Does our outreach to diverse populations (elderly, youth, race or ethnicity, class, gender) gain long term engagement? Do we regularly program, celebrate, advocate and promote to/with those not close to the activities?

What

Development of a shared marketing plan, calendar, shared grant making, shared sponsorship asks, multimedia programs, shared aesthetics, co-location, division and unison of labor, opening of the books are all things to consider.

Where

Perform an inventory of spaces to consider, and activities that animate

When

We are now 4 years into this process, and we are just beginning. We focused on short and long term outcomes, and put the talents of those we had in the right places. Urgent needs took priority, but we simultaneously spent time grinding out possibilities and reaching consensus and compromise where we could.

How

Someone needed to accept the role of convener (asking hard questions), someone had to accept the role of administrator (staying on task), and all have to take a piece of the research to get new ideas and best practices. Individual leaders and organization boards had to buy into this process.

Geography, Demography & Landscape

Understanding the way your place is, and how what you're doing fits into the context of what else is going on physically, philosophically, socially, and economically helps frame your focus:

- *City-Data, Boston Fed Working Cities Challenge
- *Community Branding
- *Urban Design and Community Planning
- *Public Health Indicators
- *Education
- *Local assets across sectors
- *Listen for alignment
- *Unlikely partners may be the key:
church, store, public works, teen center,
shelter, daycare
- *Tactical Urbanism
- *Collective Impact
- *The Eight Breaths of Process Architecture

About

Waterville Main Street

Jennifer Olsen
Executive Director
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As Executive Director of Waterville Main Street, the administrative agency for the Waterville Creates! Project, Jen's role was to support the diverse arts-interested agencies in Waterville. Waterville Main Street's mission is economic development in the context of historic preservation, with 4 areas of concentration: promotional events, volunteer development, public space design, and economic restructuring. Waterville Main Street produces year-round community events and initiatives, which include the Maine Open Juried Art Show, Arts Fest, and Poetry Express.