



THE BUSINESS OF PUBLIC ART

How to create additional revenue
and build a thriving Mural business.

In collaboration with Creative Waco.

vivid creative

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The information within is based entirely on our experiences as artists and creative strategists. Therefore, here are expressions of opinion, and we cannot guarantee any specific outcomes.

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A NOTE FROM ANDREA

Hey Artists, Do you find yourself wondering how to get well-paying public art projects? Does putting a project pitch together seem overwhelming and keep you up at night?

At Vivid Creative, we help visual artists like you with your art business strategy, website, art marketing and all the essential documents professional artists need.

This guide will teach you to plan and budget your murals when working with cities, businesses and big brands while discovering how to grow a profitable mural business, so you are well compensated for all your hard work.

We are thrilled for you to take this next step in your artist journey. So, again, thank you for entrusting us as your guide, and we look forward to hearing how this resource benefited you.

xo Andrea

Andrea La Valleur-Purvis

Artist and Founder, Vivid Creative

<https://artbizconsulting.com>

Introduction to Public Art

Public art can be a powerful tool for beautifying and enlivening our cities. It can also be a way to tell stories, celebrate history, and promote civic engagement.

1. Start with a clear goal. What do you want your public art to achieve? Do you want to create a sense of place, promote civic engagement, or simply beautify the city? Once you know your goal, you can start to think about the type of art that would be most effective.
2. Consider the site. Where will your public art be located? The site will have a big impact on the type of art that you choose. For example, a mural would be a good fit for a busy street corner, while a sculpture might be more appropriate for a park or plaza.
3. Involve the community. Public art is for everyone, so it's important to involve the community in the planning process. This could involve holding public meetings, conducting surveys, or creating an online forum where people can share their ideas.
4. Choose the right artist. The artist you choose will have a big impact on the success of your public art project. Look for an artist who has a strong understanding of your goal and the site, and who is willing to work with the community.
5. Make sure the art is durable. Public art is often exposed to the elements, so it's important to choose materials that will last. You'll also need to consider maintenance and security requirements.
6. Celebrate the art! Once your public art is installed, be sure to celebrate its completion. This could involve holding a public ceremony, creating a website or social media campaign, or simply letting people know about the art through word-of-mouth.

Types of Public Art

- Airports
- Government Buildings
- Universities
- Highway Murals
- Theme parks
- Restaurants
- Retail Buildings
- Tech Brands
- Office, Gyms, Co-working spaces
- Medical Office, Clinics and Hospitals
- Hotels and Resorts
- Apartment Buildings
- Parking Garages
- Tennis Courts, Basketball Courts, Swimming Pools
- Stadiums
- Architectural Sculptures/Design
- City sponsored Public Art Murals
- Festivals, Corporate Events and Temporary Spaces
- Historic or commemorative statues and public art
- Temporary art installations for large industry or local events
- Wayfinding for airports and public spaces
- Murals
- Sculpture
- Memorials
- Integrated Architectural or Landscape work
- Community Art
- Digital New Media
- Performances

Artists' constitutional rights explained

[The Right to Artistic Express - Forecast](#)

Cultural Equity in Public Art

[Americans for the art resource](#)

Qualifying potential projects

Independent artists deserve to get paid fairly and generously for their work. When you have clarity in the types of people and projects you want to work on and the yearly revenue you want to make from your art, you will start saying no to opportunities that don't align with your vision and start taking action to pursue your vision.

- Create your yes list! 3 of the 4 things you put on your yes list have to be true for you to accept a project.
 - Here's an example
 - The budget works for me
 - I'm available
 - It's a great opportunity and gives me visibility or some other benefit
 - The opportunity aligns with my values/goals
- Does the opportunity include a listed budget? If not, be sure to discuss this before applying. If you are uncomfortable asking about money, ask what budget they have in mind for the project.
- If their budget is below your minimum, say so. If they want a custom art installation that typically has a project value of \$10,000 and they only have \$5000, and you want to work with them, suggest reducing scope (size, detail, subject matter). This shows you are flexible and friendly to work with.
- What is the purpose of the project? This will help you understand the client's goals for the project and what they hope to achieve with the mural.

- What is the budget for the project? This will help you determine whether or not your skills are within the client's price range.
- What is the timeline for the project? This will help you see if you have the availability to work on the project.
- What is the location of the project? This will help you determine the logistics of the project, such as the access to the site and the necessary permits.
- What materials and color are required? This will help you determine if your artistic style is a good fit for the client's vision.
- What is the client's experience with public art? This will help you understand the client's expectations for the project and how much they need your guidance.
- Be clear about your capabilities. Make sure the potential client understands if you have the required skills and shop/studio access to complete this project.
- Be responsive. Get back to potential clients promptly and answer their questions in a clear and concise way.
- Be professional. Act professionally when meeting with potential clients. This will help them see that you are a professional artist who is capable of delivering high-quality work.

Business Basics

Full time artists are also businesses. In short, business basics are essential for visual artists who want to be successful and make a full-time living from your work.

- To be able to run your art business effectively. This includes tasks such as setting prices, managing finances, marketing your services, and creating contracts.

- To protect your intellectual property. This includes copyrighting your work and registering trademarks.
- To negotiate effectively. This includes negotiating with nonprofits, business owners, building owners and other stakeholders.
- To be able to take advantage of business opportunities. This includes knowing how to apply for grants, get involved in public art projects, and sell your work online.

Texas Legal structures

If you're a full time artist, you will likely benefit from being registered as an LLC (Limited Liability Company). Talk to your accountant or Legal advisor for more information. If you can't afford to hire a Lawyer, visit our friends at Startup Waco to help with setting up your legal structure.

Liability Insurance

- At minimum, artists who make public art are required to have a 1+ Million General Liability Policy to protect themselves from accidentally damaging property and more. When you work with businesses, brands or government entities, you will be required to have proof of Insurance.
- Policies start from \$300 a year with Next Insurance and take less than 10 min to fill out online.
- If you work with a crew, make sure they either carry their own liability insurance or that your policy includes them and their vehicles, tools.
- Ensure your vehicle has the proper coverage for business use

Permits + Licenses

- Familiarize yourself with your local permitting and licensing rules.
- If you are working with a project partner like Creative Waco, they typically obtain these for the project.

Copyright

- What is it?
 - **Copyright** is a legal right that protects original works of authorship, such as paintings, sculptures, photographs, and music. Copyright gives the artist the exclusive right to reproduce, distribute, perform, display, and create derivative works from their work.
 - **DMCA takedown notices:** The Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) gives artists the right to send takedown notices to websites that are hosting infringing copies of their work. This means that artists can have infringing copies of their work removed from the internet.
 - **Trademarks:** Trademarks are words, phrases, symbols, or designs that identify a particular product or service. Artists can register trademarks for their work to prevent others from using their work without permission.
 - Visual Artists Rights Act (VARA) of 1990 [reference](#)
- Artists should always retain Intellectual Property rights and list this in the contract
- If you wish, you can offer IP buyouts (at a very generous rate)
- **Register your copyrights:** Registering your copyrights with the U.S. Copyright Office is the best way to protect your work. Registration gives you the right to sue infringers and to collect statutory damages.
- **Use a watermark:** A watermark is a transparent image that is embedded in your work. This can help to deter infringers and to make it easier to identify your work if it is copied.
- **Include a copyright notice:** A copyright notice is a simple way to inform others that your work is copyrighted. The notice should include the copyright symbol (©), the year of first publication, and your name.

- **Keep good records:** Keep good records of your work, including the date you created it, the materials you used, and any changes you made to it. This documentation can be helpful if you need to prove that you are the copyright owner.

Business Banking

- Every business should keep their financial records separate from their personal spending. Look for inexpensive business banking options. In Texas, you will need your state issued documents to set up business checking accounts.
- If you are not setting up a legal entity, for example you are a sole proprietor, set up a separate checking account to handle your business income and spending.

Contracts

- Each and every project needs a signed contract, no ifs ands or buts! Contracts serve as legal protection to you and your client, as well as establishing agreed upon prices, timelines and creative decisions.
- Be very clear on who has creative input. Know your stakeholders.
- Most Public Art for government agencies has to be formally accepted by city council and or the mayor's office.
- If you're working with government agencies, big corporations or established non-profit organizations, their legal teams will send you a contract.
- Understand your rights and responsibilities. You can request amendments to legal documents if something doesn't align with your vision, or values. AND in some cases, your requests won't be accepted. Decide in advance if this is a deal breaker for you.
- Hire a lawyer to prepare a customized contract, it will protect you and is worth the investment. Startup Waco offers low cost legal services.

- Understand the deposit and payment terms.
- What happens if the project is delayed significantly or canceled after it has been awarded?
- What happens after your project is covered, moved, destroyed or modified without your consent?
-

Funding Opportunities

- Self-funding
- Private donors and collectors
- Sponsorships
- Kickstarter campaign
- Grants
- Fellowships
- Collaborations
- Museums
- Media partnerships

Example Budgets

Most public art commissions list the final number and look to the artist to provide a budget breakdown. Occasionally, they look for this budget during the application process, and it is most commonly included when looking for external funding opportunities.

Example Budget breakdown could look like this:

- 10-30% Materials

- 5-10% Equipment, tools and Studio rentals
- 20-40% Fabrication costs (external)
- 20-30% Artist + Project Management fee
- 5-10% Professional Services, Additional Labor, Contractors, Specialty consultants
- 3-10% Installation & Signage*
- 1-5% Insurance
- 1-3 %Legal Fees*
- 1-5% Travel
- 5-10% Contingency

\$40K Fabrication

\$25K Artist Fee

\$20K Specialty services

\$15K Legal, Travel, Insurance

\$100K Total

*often covered by commissioning body

Answer the Call

Submitting your work to public art opportunities gives you exposure and networking opportunities beyond your zip code.

Breaking into public art without prior experience is possible, and realistically, artists typically have a better chance for winning projects under \$10,000.

If you have experience doing large-scale, or commercial work with larger budgets, but not in public art, artists should clearly state their experience and skill levels.

Some calls for art focus specifically on emerging artists or artists who have not created permanent work, or public works. Look out for these special opportunities.

If you don't yet have much experience in a particular medium, or if you've mostly assisted other artists in their work, clearly state this experience and explain what you were responsible for.

If you run into questions about a call for art, reach out to the contact person. They are there to help you. Just ask :)

Understanding RFPs and RFQs

- Includes a summary of the project
- Project objectives
- Timelines + Budget
- Submission Instructions
- Selection Process + Dates
- Juring committee (sometimes)
- Many artists don't follow submitting guidelines. Read the application requirements several times before submitting.

RFP - Request for Proposal asks artists to develop ideas (and sometimes sketches) to answer the call for art more specifically.

RFQ - Request for Qualification asks artists to submit information about their training, past experience, previous works and ability to create a public artwork as per the call.

Calls for Art listings

- [Forecast Public Art Opportunities](#)
- [Creative Waco Project Calls](#)
- [Codaworx open calls](#)
- [Cafe](#) - Call for Entry
- [Public Artist](#)
- [Americans for the Arts](#)

Important Art Awards

- [Codaworx](#)
- [National Mural Awards](#)
- [Future Generation Art Prize](#) (\$100,000 award)
- [Art Prize](#)
- [Hugo Boss Award via Guggenheim Museum](#) (\$100,000 award)
- [Bucksbaum Award](#) (included in the Whitney Biennial, \$100,000 award)
- [Marcel Duchamp Prize](#) - Centre Pompidou, Paris
- [MacArthur Fellows](#)

Artist Directories

- [Creative Waco Artist Directory](#)
- [Codaworx](#)
- [The Street Art Directory](#)
- [Artist Directory by Country](#)

Waco Public Art Programming

[Public art Strategic Plan](#) - pending approval by city council

Public Art websites

- [Institute for Public Art](#)
- [Public Art case studies](#)
- [Codaworx project library](#)
- [Public Art Fund](#)
- [Public Art Archive](#)
- [Americans for the Arts](#)
- [AFTA Public Art Resource Center](#)
- [Texans for the Arts](#)
- [Texas Commission on the Arts](#)
- [Arts & Place](#)
- [Office of Public Art](#)

Prepare your application

Applications for art opportunities are competitive, especially in larger locations or high-visibility projects.

If graphic design is not your strong suit, use a high-end pre designed template that focuses on clean layouts. Remember, the focus is on your skills and artwork to win the project. Don't over design.

- Unless otherwise instructed, create your presentation as a 16x9 slide presentation. Keep it short, around 10-15 slides.
- Use Canva or Google Sheets (free)
- Choose 1, max two typefaces (fonts)
- Keep color to a minimum
- Avoid funky fonts, text shadows, text on photos etc
- Keep an eye on the file size. Files over 10MB typically are blocked by email providers, upload your file to google drive, dropbox or your website, then share the link. Make sure it is set to public - to avoid time sensitive access requests.
- Typically, applications include:
 - Inspiration for your idea
 - Conceptual drawings
 - Optional: renderings of artwork in the site specific location (hire a designer to create a sketchup mockup)
 - A short bio about you

- 3 past projects you're proud of with size, location, description. Choose your best photos.
- Contact details
- Artist CV
- Artist Statement
- Optional: Client testimonials
- Optional: Prototypes, Models
- If you want to stand out from other applicants, push the boundaries of your presentation. Record a video of yourself giving the pitch, add voice narration to a slide deck - AND respect the application requirements and the jury's time.
- Jury committees often review hundreds of applications, especially for bigger projects.
- Use this type of presentation to answer RFPs and RFQs
- Use it to pitch your ideas to non-profits, cities and other projects you want to work on.
- Adapt each presentation to the in response to the projects needs or project goals.
- We love [Creative Market](#) for designer templates and [Moo.com](#) for printing.

Project Planning

Project planning is essential for mural artists who want to complete projects successfully and avoid client related problems, unmet expectations and project delays.

By following a systematic approach to project planning, you can increase your chances of success.

- Know your project calendar. Only add a project to your calendar after the project has signed the contract and paid a deposit. Everything else is just a 'maybe' until confirmed.
- How much time do you need for each phase?
- Time to present to the client and allow for feedback.
- Account for time to prepare the site or ask your client to take care of it. Provide your requirements.
- What is public signage (or way-finding opportunities?)
- What about location? Is the space easily accessible? Do you need to hire equipment to install the work? Will the work be installed by city employees or contractors?
 - For destinations, add travel and recovery days

Best practices

- Start by understanding the project's goals and objectives, who is it for, is there a broader impact or cultural mission?
- Identify the stakeholders and decision makers. Avoid getting feedback and direction from too many people, it gets overwhelming and nobody likes projects with 'too many cooks in the kitchen'.
- Create a timeline - and stay flexible
- Know the project's budget and estimate yours.
- Know your materials, tools and equipment
- Develop your communication plan with your stakeholders (and internal creative team, if applicable)
- Be flexible! Especially if you are working with big organizations, government agencies or nonprofit organizations. Sometimes, projects take months or even years to complete.
- If you have a lot of projects, consider using a project management tool like Monday, Trello or Asana.
 - If you are low tech, create a large printed calendar that acts like a visual project board.

Press

Artists who think like entrepreneurs and act like marketers have a design path of their customers' experience. Look at marketing as a 'transfer of enthusiasm'. When you share about your work and what it's like to work with you .

CREATING VISIBILITY

- Artists need to be their own advocates, first. Create your own visibility by pitching your projects to media outlets, podcasts, arts nonprofits, magazines etc
- Look for networking opportunities in person, nearby cities and online. If you want to meet someone, introduce yourself!
- Marketing requires taking consistent action in the long term. Many marketing efforts only show results after 6-9 months of consistent action.
- Set up our Google Business Profile, it's free and makes your work more discoverable in search results
- Have high-quality photos of your finished projects, with detail shots, work-in-progress and sketches
- Create a press kit (template in the artist starter kit)
- Connect with local and national press to get exposure
 - Waco Tribune - Herald
 - Modern Texas Living
 - The Wacoan
 - Local Podcasts through Rogue Media or Creative Waco NPR
 - Glasstire (Texas Artist Publication)

Your artist website must haves

Every artist needs a website to present their work professionally. While there are 5 different types of website strategies for Visual Artists, artists who focus on public art typically include the following:

- No website? If you have a tiny budget, use Convert Kit to set up a landing page, with 3-5 images of past work, a short bio and a way to contact you.
- A select portfolio of recent work. It's important to only show your best work. Take high quality photos of your work, include up close details shots, during painting and even show sketches. Include the dimensions, materials, (fabricator if it's not you), location and year made
- About page: Include a short bio and profile photo. Contemporary artists include an artist statement, CV and Exhibits list, if you have this information and also paint originals, then include it.
- Press: List any podcast episodes, press and blog articles and any bibliography
- Contact: This is the most important page. Make it easy to get a hold of you, so many artists miss this step.
- Process: Sharing your creative and project process gives your potential clients insights into how you work. It clearly communicates your process and standards, so they know what to expect when they work with you.
- Testimonies: having 3-5 real testimonials from past clients on the home page, about page and/or process page shows trust and tells

prospective clients that someone had a good experience working with you.

- Home page: In some cases your portfolio may be the home page. The home page strategy will depend on what your primary objective is.
- Check your site each month, to ensure it is current, has no broken links and displays the most recent and accurate information.
- Collect email addresses with an opt-in form. Check our [resources page](#) to find our favorite tools for web and marketing.
- Add a form to your contact page that allows someone to inquire about working with you. Include:
 - Name
 - Email
 - Phone
 - Website
 - Budget range (for example, if your project minimum is \$3500 this list could be: \$3500, \$5000-\$10,000 or over \$20,000. Those numbers can go up if you have more experience)
 - Timeline: (Next 3-6 months, 6-9 months, not sure yet)
 - Artwork sizes - offer a range of preselected sizes

Beyond the work

Your work doesn't stop after it's installed.

- When you're designing a new project, consider offering the same artwork (or adapted design) as limited edition print, merchandise

(keep it classy), small sculptures, Make an art book of your designs etc.

- Create opportunities - pitch your public art idea to local leaders, non-profits or local government.
- Partner with commercial property owners, restaurants, hotels, resorts, hair salons,
- Partner with other creative professionals and agencies like architects, interior designers, Office buildings, Co-working spaces
- Create an AR experience triggered by the public art
- Submit your work for awards, having industry recognition not only validates your work (and your ego) it creates greater visibility to audiences that may have never noticed you before.

Artist Starter Kit

The 5 Essential Documents Every Professional Artist Needs To Succeed. Includes a guide and template for each of the following:

- Artist CV

- Artist Bio
- Artist Statement
- Artist Press Kit
- Certificate of Authenticity
- BONUS: Artwork Pricing Calculator

[FREE Download](#)

Key Takeaways

- Re-Read the application instructions several times to avoid missing critical information.
- Realistically represent your skills and abilities to produce a project on time and within budget.
- Consider collaborating with other artists or fabricators to apply for bigger projects
- Create a stunning portfolio of your work, keep it up to-date
- Having an artist website and business cards is essential to promoting yourself professionally in the community.
- Look at these practical tips and resources as a guide, not an absolute. Use what works and adapt them to your art practice.
- Be flexible. Always communicate with your stakeholders when challenges arise.

Connect with Vivid Creative

Have questions, feedback, or testimony?

Reach out at hello@artbizconsulting.com

Find us online <https://artbizconsulting.com>

Connect on Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/artbizconsulting/>

Listen to our podcast Art Biz Talk
<https://artbizconsulting.com/podcast/>

Join Vivid Creative's Free Art Biz Talk' Email newsletter for professional artists <https://artbizconsulting.com/subscribe/>

Bookmark this page for more free and paid resources and templates, its free to join

<https://artbizconsulting.com/members-only-resource-center-for-visual-artists/>

We love [Creative Market](#) for designer templates and [Moo.com](#) for printing

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Join the Creative Directory <https://creativewaco.org/directory/>

Open Project Calls <https://creativewaco.org/project-calls/>