

# Renewal Well

“ Explore complex barriers to prosperity and justice in arts and culture and beyond.

## What is it?

ArtsPond's Renewal Well is a care-centered guide designed to explore the complex barriers to prosperity and justice in arts and culture and beyond. Based upon five interconnected elements, it examines systemic causes, impacts, community reactions, solutions, and the role of individual leadership in driving transformative change. This approach embraces perspectives ranging from the personal to the planetary, aiming to foster equity, sustainability, and collective wellbeing in arts and culture. The five elements are roots (systemic causes), ripples (global impacts), responses (ecosystem reactions), remedies (community solutions), and resources (individual leaders).

For example:

### Roots (systemic causes)

Identifying the underlying root causes of precarity and injustice at a systemic level.

Roots are the deep-seated causes of harms in different systems including arts and culture. Like the unseen foundations of a tree, these are the interconnected policies, practices, histories, and ideologies that have created inequality and instability in arts and culture. By identifying and naming these hidden drivers (such as structural racism, lack of funding equity, or exclusionary practices), we can better understand the underlying problems that perpetuate harm and prevent progress.

### Ripples (global impacts)

Recognizing the ripple effects or consequences of precarity and injustice in different communities.

Ripples symbolize the wide-ranging effects of the root causes, extending outward like waves in water. They reveal how injustice and precarity impact different communities across the globe. This element focuses on mapping how systemic issues like economic insecurity, cultural erasure, or climate change create visible and invisible consequences in arts and culture. By observing these ripples, we can see connections between the local and global, and understand how one community's struggle reflects a larger pattern of harm.

## Responses (ecosystem reactions)

Documenting the reactions of various communities, positive or otherwise, to the ripples of systemic precarity and injustice.

Responses capture how individuals and communities react to the ripples of precarity and injustice. These reactions vary widely. They may be positive acts of solidarity and resilience, or negative responses like division or burnout. This element documents these diverse reactions to understand how communities navigate crises, collaborate, and innovate in the face of adversity, while also learning from setbacks or tensions that emerge.

## Remedies (community solutions)

Sharing the diversity of changemaking solutions and caregiving therapies in response to systemic precarity and injustice.

Remedies focus on the healing and transformative solutions that communities develop in response to systemic issues. These include grassroots initiatives, policy changes, caregiving practices, or creative innovations that offer pathways to equity and justice. By amplifying these diverse changemaking efforts, this element highlights the power of collective wisdom and action in creating a more caring and sustainable future.

## Resources (individual leaders)

Highlighting the importance of individuals who serve as visionary leaders for the future.

Resources shine a light on the individual leaders and visionaries who challenge the status quo and inspire change. These may be artists, activists, caregivers, or cultural workers who exemplify courage, creativity, and care in their actions. By sharing their stories and approaches, this element celebrates the essential role of people fostering systemic change and serves as a guide for others seeking to lead with vision and integrity.

# How to use it?

To apply the Renewal Well framework, follow these steps aligned with its five stages:

## Explore the roots (systemic causes)

- **What:** Identify and analyze the foundational causes of precarity and injustice within arts and culture.
- **How:** Research and map out structural issues such as funding inequities, historical exclusions, or systemic racism. Use data, lived experiences, and historical analysis to understand these root problems.

## Trace the ripples (global impacts)

- **What:** Observe and document the broader consequences of systemic issues. While the majority of consequences are likely to be negative when considering systemic barriers, consider those that have additional impacts that may be neutral, unintended, or even positive.
- **How:** Map the local and global impacts of these causes on communities, such as cultural erasure, climate-related challenges, or economic instability. Understand how these ripples shape individual and collective experiences in arts and culture.

## Assess the responses (ecosystem reactions)

- **What:** Record the range of reactions from individuals and communities to these systemic challenges. Like ripples, responses may be a mixture of negative, neutral, and/or positive. Consider how these interactions play out.
- **How:** Identify acts of resilience, innovation, solidarity, as well as setbacks like burnout or fragmentation. Document how these reactions influence cultural practices and collective healing.

## Amplify the remedies (community solutions)

- **What:** Highlight and implement solutions developed by communities to address precarity and injustice.
- **How:** Share success stories of grassroots efforts, caregiving practices, or policy changes. Encourage the adoption of creative and systemic interventions that promote equity and sustainability.

## Celebrate the Resources (individual leaders)

- **What:** Showcase the role of visionary leaders driving systemic change.
- **How:** Identify and learn from artists, activists, and cultural workers whose actions inspire care, courage, and creativity. Share their stories to guide and motivate others seeking to lead transformative efforts.

# Examples in arts and culture

## 1. Indigenous

An Indigenous visual artist navigates the complex intersection of colonialism, data sovereignty, and artificial intelligence (AI) in the digital art world. The artist notices their traditional motifs and cultural expressions being appropriated by AI algorithms trained on Indigenous art without consent or acknowledgment. This leads them to explore ways to reclaim agency over their cultural heritage, address systemic inequities in the digital sphere, and advocate for Indigenous data sovereignty and ethical AI practices.

- **Roots**

The artist investigates the systemic causes of cultural appropriation in AI training models, such as the lack of consent in data collection and the historical erasure of Indigenous voices in art and technology. They highlight how colonial ideologies persist in the digital world, where algorithms replicate and profit from traditional art forms without engaging with the communities that created them.

- **Ripples**

The ripple effects of this systemic issue are visible in the global digital art market. The artist documents how AI-generated art featuring Indigenous motifs floods online marketplaces, diluting the cultural and spiritual significance of these symbols. This impacts both the cultural integrity of Indigenous communities and the economic sustainability of Indigenous artists whose works are devalued or overshadowed.

- **Responses**

In response, the artist collaborates with their community to raise awareness about these issues. They organize online discussions and exhibitions that showcase the ethical concerns surrounding AI in art. They also participate in solidarity networks with other Indigenous and marginalized artists to amplify their collective voice against exploitation in the digital sphere.

- **Remedies**

The artist works to create community-driven solutions by advocating for the development of ethical AI practices. They collaborate with technologists and cultural leaders to establish guidelines for AI use that respect Indigenous data sovereignty. This includes the creation of a digital registry where Indigenous artists can protect their work and specify how it can (or cannot) be used in AI training.

- **Resources**

As a visionary leader, the artist shares their story at international conferences and through their artwork, which critically engages with themes of colonialism, data sovereignty, and AI ethics. Their efforts inspire other Indigenous artists and technologists to challenge exploitative practices and innovate with care and integrity, cultivating a more equitable digital art landscape. They curate an exhibition and publish a resource guide celebrating the knowledge and wisdom of these Indigenous leaders.

## 2. Deaf

A Deaf youth artist from a rural community confronts the pervasive effects of ableism and audism in their artistic journey. They reflect on the barriers they face, from a lack of accessible art spaces to societal biases that devalue Deaf culture and linguistic diversity. Through their art, they aim to challenge these prejudices, highlight the richness of Deaf experiences, and create inclusive spaces that empower other Deaf artists.

- **Roots**

The artist identifies the systemic roots of ableism and audism that impact their community. This includes the historical marginalization of Deaf people, the lack of sign language recognition, and the exclusion of Deaf perspectives in mainstream arts. They explore how these systemic issues are magnified in rural areas, where resources and accessibility are often limited.

- **Ripples**

The ripple effects are evident in the artist's daily life and work. They observe how ableism and audism lead to isolation, as rural art institutions often fail to provide accommodations such as interpreters or visual descriptions. These barriers not only hinder their artistic growth but also perpetuate the underrepresentation of Deaf culture in rural and national artistic narratives.

- **Responses**

In response, the artist begins to use their work as a form of activism. They create visual art pieces that depict the lived experiences of Deaf individuals, highlighting themes of resilience, pride, and community. They also start conversations about the importance of accessibility and inclusivity by sharing their work on social media and engaging with local schools and organizations.

- **Remedies**

The artist takes action by collaborating with their community to establish a Deaf-friendly art workshop series in their town. These workshops emphasize the use of visual storytelling and create a safe space for Deaf and hearing-impaired individuals to express themselves. They also advocate for systemic changes, such as urging local art galleries to adopt more inclusive practices, including hiring interpreters and providing captioning for events.

- **Resources**

As a young leader, the artist becomes a role model for other Deaf youth in their community. Their efforts to challenge ableism and audism inspire others to embrace their identities and advocate for their rights. Through their art and advocacy, they demonstrate the power of creativity as a tool for social change, ensuring that Deaf voices are not only heard but celebrated.