



Welcome to the Project Discovery Workshop! 🎨

Prepared for Greater Hartford Arts Council

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Attendees:

Nesolagus Team:

- Aaron Lyles (Project Lead) - aaron@nesolagus.com
- Lucas Whelan (Development Partner) - lucas@nesolagus.com
- TBD [Nic Munson (Project Manager) - nic.munson@gmail.com]

GHAC Team:

- Amanda Roy (CEO, Greater Hartford Arts Council) - ARoy@letsgoarts.org
- Pablo Pita (CCO, Greater Hartford Arts Council)- ppita@letsgoarts.org
- [Additional GHAC stakeholders TBD]

Workshop Agenda (2 Hours)

1. Opening & Project Overview (15 mins)
 2. Core Discovery Questions (60 mins)
 3. Logistics & Implementation (30 mins)
 4. Next Steps & Timeline (15 mins)
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Project Overview (15 mins)

"Every donor has a story about why they care. This tool doesn't ask 'How much will you give?'—it asks, 'What moves you, and how can we create change together?' That's the relationship we're building."

We aim to develop a custom, interactive survey experience designed to enhance GHAC's donor engagement and fundraising strategy. This initiative will move beyond traditional donor surveys by ****fostering meaningful conversations, uncovering donor motivations, and creating personalized pathways for deeper engagement.**** The goal is to surface actionable insights that:

- Help GHAC strengthen donor relationships
- Help GHAC refine messaging
- Help GHAC Increase fundraising effectiveness.

The survey system is designed to:

- Map GHAC's donor landscape—identifying behaviors, motivations, and giving patterns across different segments
 - Create meaningful donor conversations that strengthen relationships and encourage long-term support
 - Integrate GHAC's mission and impact stories into donor interactions to enhance engagement
 - Generate targeted insights and actionable recommendations to optimize fundraising strategies
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Timeline

Phase	Deliverables	Timeline
Phase 1: Discovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Discovery Workshop w/ stakeholders: strategic alignment, donor persona framework, question outlineDiscovery Brief Summary/Outline (project objectives, donor landscape, engagement preferences, and communication strategy ideas)Question framework (survey question set for approval) note to self	1 Week
Phase 2: Survey Creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Interactive survey (scripting & development for approval)Data environment setup	1-2 Weeks
Phase 3: Deployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Launch survey experience, monitor engagement, provide mid-campaign optimizationSurvey/QR code (deployment & access)Campaign engagement data via reports or dashboard	28 days or 2k participants (whichever comes first)
Phase 4: Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Donor insights report with persona segmentation and visualized data (includes up to 2,000 participant responses)	1-2 Weeks



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raw data export (de-identified responses, engagement insights)• Strategic memo (insights, recommendations & potential survey 2 pathways)• Final debrief session with GHAC stakeholders	
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Core Discovery Questions (60 mins)

Success & Vision (10 mins)

1. What would success look like at the end of this donor engagement initiative? How will you know this survey has been valuable for GHAC's donor relationships and fundraising strategy? We have an anonymous pool of donors, don't know a lot. We know some and know some very well. There are 23k on the full list. Amanda has been here 10 years and still knows only a small portion. Turning them into intentional, lasting relationships, WE have actual insights to who they are. Lapsed, potential, current. Motivations for giving, interests within the arts, how they like to communicate, what is holding them back, why did they stop giving. What held them back from fundraising were workplace campaign givers. Some don't give any more. Why? Why do they, why don't they. Are they giving passively or have an actual capacity for the arts? Who has the capacity for major gifts -reactivating lapsed donors--this is a big one. They just started quarterly appeal letters. People are coming back from these appeal letters--having good conversations from this. Haven't had a real conversation with these people yet.

Truths and clarity. What messaging resonates? Is it about individual stories or the greater good or something else? Climate change example. We can impact the arts in the greater Hartford region or you can do your part. Micro/macro. What kind of stories do we tell? What are the tiers for sponsorship levels--how do we define these tiers of individual



groups. Define them by giving and by characteristic traits. What donors are ready for deeper engagement with us (board memberships, looking for artists to be part of that) legacy donors, board of arts ambassadors. Understanding their networks—sphere of influence.

What are the attributes of a lapsed donor? What are some of the characteristics of our legacy donors and what would motivate or inspire them to bring others in, give more, join the board, etc. Understand what inspired them to be what they are and what they can become. Being able to profile donors

- They can currently segment in their database and segment based on giving, etc.
 - Someone who gave 15k consistently might not be there anymore, let's find out.
- Help define the structure, we won't be mapping to an existing structure.
- Once we unearth archetypes, then you can create segments and paths to get to these segments.
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We will have insights to know them first. GHAC is seen as a passthrough—NEED TO CHANGE THAT IN THE WHO WE ARE. "we do shit."

2. Amanda mentioned wanting to "rethink everything and really shake things up" after the Yale Innovation Summit. How might we use this survey to test bold new ideas or messaging approaches?

Now is the time that GHAC can step into a new brave shape as an organization. We are in this nimble space where we have gone through leadership transition, the landscape is uncertain, so how can we reimagine what we are. We are always going to activate the arts, but how. How can incorporate entrepreneurial aspects into operations. Move slower and more intentionally. Listening tour coming up. How can we do that and ACTUALLY process. This is in the fall.

BUilding a real advocacy action plan—arts are essential. GHAC didn't have capacity to get



it restored.

** How do we find balance by showing vulnerability without people seeing them as a sinking ship. **** This is a RADICAL ACT OF COMMUNITY BUILDING, it's not charity.****
WE ARE MORE THAN A PASS-THROUGH... WE DO SHIT!

Test the pitch. We have been more successful lately with potential donors when we talk about the programs and the impact, not the check. WHAT IS THE PITCH, WHAT ISN'T THE PITCH. **This is something we might want to try out within the instrument.**
Re-imagining the organization.

What is your vision, Amanda & Pablo? - 2026 there will be a strategic plan. The one in place now is pre-pandemic, previous CEO era. Artists come out of art school or are artists, but they have no idea how to make a living doing it. WE NEED TO KEEP ARTISTS living and working in this region. When it comes to arts orgs most energy goes to hartford, but they serve 34 towns. They are going into arts and wellness, the state started an "arts prescription" initiative. GHAC manages Traveler's Insurance giving for the arts. Can they manage the Hartford's giving program?

Doing more regional work, doing more partnerships outside of the arts as well. How do we connect outside of the arts? ARTISTS-focus - how can we make sure they stay and make a living. Thinking about where the opportunities lie. How do we acquire and direct capital. How do we attract more artists into the pipeline. If we don't have artists here, then we can't have a strong arts community. Inform, educate—provide opportunities to get them here and keep them here. GHAC can help arts organizations.

"We help teach artists how to live as an artist."

Capacity building for artists and art orgs, but there's something to be said about creative thinking. Everyone wants to think of themselves as a creative thinker if not an artist directly.



Coming across as authentic. Not an ivory tower arts council. Who are well. JUST BE WHO WE ARE. It's okay to be that. THIS IS THE BOLD THINKING. Visually manifest this as well. Get insights on how to be bold. Be intentionally bold. Conversations around creative and innovative thinking.

Understanding Your Donors (20 mins)

- What's something you wish you understood better about your donors' motivations and connection to GHAC? What stories resonate with them so we can include them in our appeal and include in the stories. Is it impact on stability, economic growth, healthcare, etc.?
- When do donors seem most engaged with GHAC—during what types of communications, events, or interactions? Where do you notice signs of disengagement or missed opportunities? The appeals have gotten a lot of response. It USED TO BE the workplace donations—go into Travelers, bring a band or an arts org leader and talk about their mission and how GHAC has helped them, etc. but right now, they might not know the answer to this question. The high visibility time is May-Oct, because there is a lot of activities and summer/fall events. It mirrors tourism.
 - a. Appeals letter to be sent to us to see what those are like.
- Are there donor voices or perspectives that often go unheard in your current fundraising conversations? What might be keeping them from engaging more deeply? We focus primarily on corporate and foundation funders more than individuals. The last appeal had the video that had the voices of 2 donors—they talked about their why.
- What have you tried in the past to gather donor feedback or deepen engagement? What worked or didn't work? No true efforts to date.

If you could ask your donors one brave, honest question—one that might surprise you—what would you ask?

“Do the arts matter to you?”



“What's one thing you've never told us why you give or why you stopped giving?”

“What would make you feel proud for supporting GHAC?”

GHAC's Story & Positioning (20 mins)

8. How can we use this project as an opportunity for GHAC to tell your story and reintroduce yourselves to the community? What's the narrative you want to share?
Demystifying who we are and what we do. Get away from the idea that we are a passthrough for corporate and foundational funding. Truth and Clarity—the clarity of what we do and the truths of our impact that resonates with our audience. GHAC is not the same org that we were 5 10 20 years ago. Redefining what support for the arts looks like. Right now it is very volatile. Amanda is the deliverer of the message—she is the trusted friend who has a legacy in the arts region.
9. What does "being a catalyst for the arts" mean to GHAC in 2025, and how do you want donors to understand this role? How they saw it before... they are the go-to, the access to the resources. We are the experts for the arts... to use investments through donors in the most responsible way—to apply it where it will make the greatest impact. A responsibility back to the donor and an accountability to the artists benefiting from it. WE CONNECT PEOPLE; an artist with a corporation. And now they have a relationship and now they get a private gig from it, etc. WE AMPLIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR ARTISTS.

They gave a 7500 fund for a program this small org did around banned books through dance. This one thing meant so much to her. It amplified her vision. WE SHOULD TELL THIS STORY.

10. How do GHAC's three pillars—~~Create, Evolve, and Belong~~—resonate with different donor segments? NO PILLARS!!!

Capacity building—skills/talent development – we help develop skills to help artists become more career oriented and orgs to become more impactful through performance



of running.

11. How do you want donors to understand the difference between supporting individual artists versus supporting GHAC as the ecosystem builder? Amanda doesn't know if donors are going to support the individual artist side. Arts orgs don't operate without artists! A symphony doesn't run without the musicians. Open a recording studio and start a new business, etc. you can't help orgs without supporting artists.

They give \$\$ to for-profits as well, because they are a critical piece of the arts ecosystem. The manufacturing sector "Make it in CT" has done a great job in CT. They relay it to production, workforce, businesses, etc. Maybe parallel this to the arts?

WE FORGET THE ARTIST, BUT THEY ARE THE MOST ESSENTIAL PART- you don't have any arts ecosystem without them.

POTENTIAL ARCHETYPE: The secret artist who work in corporations who go to pottery class, play in a band, paint, etc. People work for you, because there is arts and culture here. You retain your employees if you have a thriving art scene.

Creative thinking can often lead to something that leads to a for-profit ecosystem. It adds to culture, the economy and a better community. Supporting the for-profit element for the ecosystem to allow for growth/self sustaining.

**** Passing the knowledge/educating staff and board on how to intentionally message what GHAC does. Do it with passion!!c Have to have shared goals and outcomes. HAVE TO HAVE A TAILORED MESSAGE. ****

12. What donor stories or testimonials best capture why people support GHAC? How can we tap into that emotional connection? Not much yet. Will need to cultivate these. Could tell donor stories through newsletters.

Engagement Strategy (10 mins)



13. What would it take for donors to see this survey as "for them" and not just "about them" or "for GHAC's benefit"? How can we ensure donors across all giving levels feel valued and excited to participate? *Focus on it being a conversation. Since we are in this nimble time, we have an opportunity to have them help SHAPE the story and our region's creative sector. TRANSPARACY - they see the outcomes of what this was– incorporate these participants in strategic planning. Impact videos, programming announcements, etc. Insights into action.*

14. What innovative programs or partnerships (like Hartford Creates, New Voices, GROW ARTS) showcase GHAC's leadership, and how do these resonate with different donor motivations? *All of these partnerships mentioned above are gone, so need to define what GHAC does now to show that. A lot will depend on Arts and Wellness. Beyond Walls is a collaborative program—that would be one. Need to develop a program for capacity building, skills building (a series of events and programs targeting an intentional program where they bring in experts, or have session workshops—potentially rev gen. Sponsor opportunities.) THIS FEELS LIKE A POTENTIAL PRODUCT ROAD MAP. Proof of concept first.*

Street stages—artist activation in the streets of Hartford. Use this model for all 34 towns. Arts performing outside of businesses busking, but getting paid \$200 an hour per show. Credit unions and local banks as a business... Potential for a POC into expanding exposure into the 34 towns.

Logistics & Implementation (30 mins)

Launch & Distribution (8 mins)

1. Who is the primary point of contact at GHAC for this project? *Pablo managing, Amanda involved.*



2. What is your ideal launch date for the donor survey?
3. What is your target number of donor participants from your 23,000 donor pool?
(Analysis scope includes up to 2,000 responses) [10k to get 2k responses feels reasonable.](#)

[Deployment question - are we sending to known members/donors or are we posting this as an invitation? Both?](#)

4. Which digital channels will you use to promote the survey (email to 12,800 newsletter subscribers, website, social media, events)?
5. The plan is to host the survey on our end and redirect participants via GHAC's side. Does this make sense to you? [Confirmed](#)

Messaging & Experience [\(8 mins\)](#)

5. How will you introduce/frame this survey to donors? What messaging will encourage participation? [Include this in the outline. An informal experience. NOT A DREADED SURVEY MONKEY.](#)
6. What tone should the survey take? What persona/voice should guide the conversations? [Amanda. Casual/authentic/professional](#)
7. Who should be the host/face of the project? [Amanda. Casual/authentic/professional](#)
 - a. Would you like an introduction video with Amanda or someone else to kick off the survey? [Yes.](#)
8. What is the maximum time you think donors will spend engaging with the survey?



Technical & Data (7 mins)

9. What existing donor data/CRM integration considerations do we need to address for data environment setup and exports? [DonorPerfect CRM, export of the list to see how far back to get approx. 10k donors. \(Maybe ask Karen/Contacts411\) Benevity \(CRM donor platform—mostly used for workplace campaigns\)](#)
10. Are there any data privacy concerns or GHAC policies we need to consider? [GHAC to provide us with their policies. No worries otherwise.](#)
11. Will you need any accommodations for accessibility (audio prompts, language options, mobile optimization)? [Sight impairment built in? If possible great.](#)

Strategy & Follow-up (7 mins)

12. What percentage of your current/past donors give at the \$25K-\$50K threshold you're targeting? [GHAC will find out.](#)
13. Can we review GHAC's current fundraising strategy to understand where our efforts could best assist? How does the "Obama approach" (small-donation strategy) fit into your vision?
14. How will you follow up with donors after they complete the survey? [TBD through digital communications about the summary of what they learned. Maybe an event? Framework options...](#)
15. Are there any donor segments you want to specifically target or exclude? [The lapsed donors—very interested in why and how to re-engage them. In the past 5 years and haven't since then.](#)



A Creative Vision: The Studio & The Gallery

As we've been thinking about this project, we're inspired by the idea of moving beyond traditional "donor surveys" toward something that feels more like GHAC itself—creative, collaborative, and community-centered.

What if we reimagined this entire experience as stepping into a creative studio? Not the transactional world of fundraising, but the collaborative space where artists, musicians, and creators come together to make something meaningful.

We're proposing:

- **The Studio** - Our survey experience where creative minds connect, share stories, and explore their passion for Hartford's arts ecosystem. In this setting "Creative Minds" are donors, artists, community leaders and art-curious CT natives across all 34 counties.
- **The Gallery** - Our insights dashboard where those conversations become a beautiful, curated display of community wisdom

This isn't about donors giving to GHAC—it's about creative allies collaborating on Hartford's artistic future. We're not extracting responses; we're recording the heartbeat of our creative community.

Potential messaging directions:

- "The Studio: Where creative minds connect"
- "The Studio: Amplifying our creative community"
- "The Studio: Recording Hartford's creative pulse"

*This is our creative vision—but this is **your** project. We'd love to explore this direction together, or pivot toward whatever feels most authentic to GHAC's voice and mission.*



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Next Steps

Immediate Actions:

- Finalize logistics decisions
- Confirm project timeline
- Send GHAC Discovery Outline Summary for approval
- Schedule Phase 2 kickoff meeting

Phase 1 Deliverables:

- Discovery Brief Summary/Outline (project objectives, donor landscape, engagement preferences, and communication strategy ideas)
- Question framework (survey question set for approval)

Thank you for your partnership in creating something meaningful for Hartford's creative community!