Greenhouse Arts Collective created the following *Project Field Notes* in 2023 as part of their Balancing Act Level UP! Pilot Project.

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GREENHOUSE ARTS COLLECTIVE

BALANCING ACT

Greenhouse Arts Collective
Level UP! Pathways to Agreement Pilot
Project Field Notes

The following notes were written by Ryan Wilcox of Greenhouse Arts Collective in 2023 as part of their Level UP! Pilot Project. The notes were updated in early 2025 to include more recent information about the project.

Project Focus: Designing and planning *Pollination,* an artist residency designed to break down barriers for Disabled artists in the performing arts

Project Inspiration: The artist residency was designed to serve as a catalyst for building an inclusive and accessible creation process for artists with physical disabilities. This concept was created as a response to the lack of opportunities for artists with access needs to develop their artistry with a living wage, adequate accommodations, and in collaboration with industry professionals.

Planning and implementation

We first envisioned the concept for the *Pollination Residency* in Fall 2022, with planning beginning in Fall 2023—approximately six months before the application deadline for a Canada Council for the Arts grant we hoped to receive to support the project. For anyone setting up a similar initiative, here are the steps we would recommend in preparation for applying for funding:

1) Approach/select/seek out an artist to work with. Greenhouse Arts Collective selected a colleague with whom we already had a working relationship for ease of communication and mutual trust.
2) Meet with the artist and discuss any concerns with typical creation models, ideas for how the process could be shaped, and accommodations they may need. Discuss information that may be helpful to describe the project in the grant application. It's great to get a sense of the piece being created, or the idea driving the artist's creativity during the residency.

3) Research relevant disabilities/chronic illnesses and necessary accommodations and adaptations for the creation process. An accessibility consultant or members of the Disabled community can be very helpful in finding adaptations to the process.
4) Create a detailed timeline, including rehearsal hours and the total length of the residency. This should include the expectations of any potential collaborators during the residency.
5) Research and estimate the costs of all preliminary accommodations and adaptations.
6) Approach potential collaborators, mentors, consultants, etc. to assess their interest in engaging in the project and/or writing letters of support.
7) Meet with the selected artist to review the project proposal and potential collaborators.
8) Modify the project proposal as needed and apply for funding.

About the artist

The first artist to participate in the *Pollination Residency* is Maeghan Taverner. Maeghan is passionate about exploring the intersection of disability aids and design technology to showcase the creativity and potential of the Disabled community. Her artistic vision is rooted in the belief that adaptive tools and technologies are not just functional devices but extensions of creative expression, capable of transforming limitations into innovative possibilities. Through her work, Maeghan seeks to reframe disability aids—such as mobility devices and assistive technologies—as integral elements of storytelling and performance.

During the residency, Maeghan will experiment with how design technology can enhance accessibility and aesthetic, integrating these elements into performance to challenge societal perceptions of disability. By embracing the unique interplay between artistry and adaptive tools, she hopes to illuminate the ingenuity of the Disabled community and inspire broader conversations about the value of inclusivity in both art and technology.

Maeghan's residency will begin in 2025 in Kjipuktuk/Halifax, Nova Scotia, using a one-bedroom apartment for rehearsals. This setup ensures we have the privacy, comfort, accessibility, and easily accessible support. The process has taken longer than expected due to our operating capacity as an ad-hoc collective, the artist's health, and the time needed to research and explore possible options.

Accommodation measures for accessible arts practices

Here are some helpful accommodation measures we identified during the project:

- Rehearsal support worker from rehearsal preparation to drop-off the artist at the end of the day.
- Providing transportation for those with mobility needs.
- Paying above minimum fees to ensure medical expenses are covered. This can start as a conversation regarding the artists living expenses to ensure their needs are met and their health is maintained throughout creation and rehearsals.
- Providing a creation and rehearsal space that is separate from the artist's home with access to a private washroom, space for rehearsal support items such as mobility aids, and a bed available in case the artist(s) needs rest.
    - A one-bedroom apartment for our residency provides exclusive access to a dedicated creation space and the necessary infrastructure to support our collaborators—without needing to relocate during an extended creation process—all at a cost comparable to a rehearsal studio.
- Creating a flexible rehearsal schedule and backup schedules for unforeseen circumstances that are fair to all collaborators.
    - This can include rehearsal cancellation pay for artists who were booked for a certain date and paying for a later date if possible and needed.
- Providing a way to collaborate online (e.g. via Zoom or live streaming) to allow more Disabled artists to collaborate safely.
- Following all recommended COVID-19 prevention measures to reduce the risk of infection, regardless of public health measures.

Key conversations

We have had valuable conversations with Maeghan about each approach to the residency and how we may format it to best suit their needs artistically and otherwise. This open discussion has ensured their comfort with the process and its feasibility with each step along the way. Our creation model could not be made without constant collaboration with Maeghan. The conversations were all led by the Greenhouse Arts Collective team and scheduled according to Maeghan’s availability and needs.

These discussions led to our decision to try a one-bedroom semi-furnished apartment as an exclusive, accessible creation studio for the resident artist that has all of their needs accessible and provides some privacy. An additional planned accommodation is to provide a paid rehearsal support worker who will support the artist throughout the creation period (including providing transportation to and from the creation space).

The current rehearsal format for our creation residency is 20 hours of dedicated creation time in the rehearsal space, and working from home for the remainder of the week. This will give time for the artist to conserve energy while reflecting on the progression in rehearsal, planning next steps, and having virtual meetings with consultants, mentors, and collaborators.

Future activity

The *Pollination Residency* will launch soon, and we aim to secure funding and establish a structured timeline that allows us to offer residencies to applicants rather than selecting artists before funding is secured.

Greenhouse Arts Collective will be creating a detailed case study of the process including a detailed budget and actual costs, the accommodation and adaptation process, successes, failures, learnings, artist and audience statements, and more. We are working to confirm partners interested in disseminating information about the residency and the case study through their channels. Current confirmed companies are: Eastern Front Theatre (Dartmouth, Nova Scotia) and Dance Nova Scotia. We are working to confirm more partners including Power Productions (Newfoundland), The Disability Collective (Toronto), and Stephenville Summer Theatre Festival (Newfoundland).

Moving forward, Greenhouse will include an accessibility budget line in every project to increase our responsiveness to requests for accommodation and allow for a more inclusive workspace.

Language considerations

“Case-by-case accommodation” is frequently used by members of the Greenhouse Arts Collective team when considering working methods and accessibility as an ad-hoc collective.

“Radical accessibility” is also used when discussing our approach to accessibility. We believe it reinforces our commitment to accommodating our artists, no matter how large or small the accommodation request may be. Radical accessibility also challenges the reader’s/listener’s understanding of what accommodations may look like.

Additional considerations

Working on a case-by-case accommodation plan takes time, education, and resources. It might be of benefit for small ad-hocs and collectives to seek professional development opportunities through consultation, mentorship, and educational programming to develop the skills and language they need to best approach conversations around accommodations.

When working in the Disabled community, health must be prioritized above all, and health can be unpredictable. Designing a creation/production framework that has flexibility where possible and structure where necessary can provide artists the space to care for themselves without fear of loss of wages or opportunity.

When creating a Disabled artist residency, consider finding an opportunity to cover the artist's living expenses regardless of their “creative output” or worked hours during the residency. Through our insights from the process and methodology created for the residency, we will create a framework of company/community education around performing arts accessibility. This framework will include social media takeovers, talkbacks after invited presentations, and dissemination of a creation report after the residency with details about our approach, successes, and what we hope to improve for next time.

When creating a process that could include collaborators, consider a plan for when rehearsals are canceled due to flare-ups or other unforeseen circumstances. For example, will the artists receive rehearsal cancellation pay and be paid to attend another rehearsal?

Ad-hoc collectives may lack the administrative and funding support available to non-profit organizations, but their flexibility allows for innovative residency approaches and greater access to dedicated accessibility and accommodation funding. Unlike non-profits that rely on operational funding and face restrictions on project-based grants, ad-hocs can leverage project-specific funding streams that often include independent accessibility grants—provided we identify our accommodation needs and associated expenses upfront.