2026 Greater Houston Arts Forum: Activate Your Data

Breakout Group Steps

1. Spend a few minutes looking through your data packet independently. Identify a data point(s) – likely a strength or a weakness - that you believe is important to build on or address.

   Example: Audiences for Houston arts and culture organizations have been growing steadily since the pandemic but are still 25% below pre-pandemic levels.

1. Add in any available context that helps us understand why it's important to address now. This could include how it may be better or worse in Houston than in other places, how it's changed over time, or how it may be connected to other insights.

   Examples: Visual arts declines are steeper than performing arts declines. Nationally, audiences for arts and culture organizations are 63% below pre-pandemic levels, showing Houston's been more successful than most cities at rebuilding audiences after the pandemic.

2. Brainstorm potential solutions and the key actors who would be needed to move the solutions forward.

   Here are some actors you might consider:
   City council: approves the city budget and arts contracts (including HOT funds), holds committee hearings, sets policy through ordinances like the civic art program
   Foundations: fund pilots, research, and shared infrastructure
   Arts organizations: collaborate on programs, share data, co-market
   Businesses / Houston First: sponsorships, tourism, and visitor marketing

   Examples: Solutions could include a shared marketing campaign across

cultural orgs or the city as a whole; subsidies for programs or events in areas of the city with low arts access, investments in shared data infrastructure to better understand non-attenders, etc.

3. Craft an argument in this format on the large post-it at your table.

   Dear **[actor you want to influence]**,
   [X] is an important asset [or a critical challenge] in Houston
   Which is important to work to address now because **[Y: comparison or context].**
   And which you could help address by **[doing Z]**.

4. Place your group's post-it(s) in its themed area (arts education, artists, economics).

5. When prompted, grab 5 stickers from your table and explore arguments shared by other groups. Place your stickers on the arguments you find most compelling.

Dear Houston Arts Funders,

Houston arts audiences are recovering faster than the national average, but still sit 25% below pre-pandemic levels. That gap means less earned revenue and more reliance on contributed income for organizations and fewer Houstonians engaging in arts and culture.

Help us build on Houston's momentum by:

1. **Mapping who's missing:** fund research on where arts programming is lacking, by geography and demographics.
2. **Filling those gaps:** fund programs led by artists and organizations rooted in those communities.

3. **Spreading the word:** invest in shared tools like a citywide events calendar or joint marketing campaign.

Thank you.









