

# The Art of Crafting a Meaningful Residency: Key Insights for Planners & Funders

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Prepared by:

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## Why Residencies Matter?

Residencies are a fantastic opportunity for makers to dive into new environments, discover new skills, and connect with experts and like-minded creatives. They serve as playgrounds for innovation, where ideas flow freely, and skills are swapped across cultures. This document is intended to guide future residencies, providing insights and lessons learned to create meaningful and impactful experiences. By embracing this exchange, residencies spark exciting new solutions, push the boundaries of what's possible, and build lasting relationships and networks. It's a space where personal growth, creativity, and collaboration come together to make magic happen, long after the residency ends.

## What Works in a Residency?

### Start Early, Really Early

Planning ahead isn't just nice—it's essential. Giving yourself at least 6 months before the residency starts means you'll have time to sort out all the big stuff: visas, materials, the right people. If you don't give yourself enough time, you end up scrambling, and no one wants that. It's about setting things up so everyone can hit the ground running. Most importantly, **don't underestimate the time** it may take to even get a visa appointment. Prepare documents and book appointments as soon as possible!

### Get the Right Match

Matching makers with the right mentors or experts isn't just about skills—it's about shared goals and a clear vision for the project. Work closely with networks, as they understand their community best. Let makerspaces take the lead in selecting their participants—they know who fits their space and culture. When the match is right, everyone is more invested, and collaboration flows naturally.

**Bonus tip:** give makers and mentors time to connect, chat, and plan before the residency kicks off. This pre-residency alignment lays the foundation for a successful and fulfilling experience.

### Make Makers Feel at Home

A residency isn't just about the work—it's about creating a sense of belonging. Especially in rural areas with limited mobility, it's vital to make makers feel at ease in their new environment. Think about inviting more than one maker to join the residency at the same time. Having peers to share the experience with can make a huge difference, both socially and creatively.

Focus on building a welcoming community within the makerspace—this can be as simple as shared meals, local introductions, or casual meetups. When makers feel connected to those around them, they're more likely to thrive. Working alongside others, sharing ideas, and supporting one another not only strengthens individual projects but also fosters collaboration that leads to something greater than the sum of its parts.

### Keep Communication Simple

Miscommunication is a killer. The simpler and clearer you can make things, the better. A quick call, rather than endless back-and-forth emails, can make a huge difference. And while language barriers may be part of the game, using plain language can go a long way.

### Provide the Tools and Space to Experiment

You can't make great things without the right tools, so make sure everything is in place from the start. If you're in a region with limited resources, plan ahead to make sure makers don't waste time hunting down materials. If they can focus on the creative process instead of logistics, the work will speak for itself.

### Give Time to Play

Innovation doesn't happen overnight. Don't rush it. Depending on the project, a month-long residency is usually the minimum. More time allows time for makers to experiment, iterate, and develop their ideas without feeling like they're racing against the clock. No matter how long the residency lasts, good preparation including co-elaborating a project plan is key!

### Be Transparent About Financial Support

The last thing a maker needs is to be stressed about money. Be clear about funding from day one—how much per diem they'll get, how expenses are covered, and what's expected financially. This clarity lets makers focus on the project, not worrying about where their next meal is coming from.

### Ensure Financial Support for Everyone

A successful residency depends on making sure all involved parties are financially equipped to participate fully. From makerspace networks to makers themselves and especially the hosting makerspaces, everyone should have the resources they need to contribute their best.

Hosting makerspaces, in particular, often need to allocate extra time and expertise to prepare for the residency, which can be a significant effort. Ensure they're supported to cover these commitments, especially if the residency itself is on a shorter timeline. Clear and sufficient funding allows everyone to focus on creating an impactful experience rather than worrying about logistics.



## How to Make It All Happen

- Plan **at least** 6 months ahead to give yourself plenty of time to sort out the big details like visas and materials.
- Focus on matching goals and vision, not just skills—make sure everyone is aligned.
- Keep communication short and clear—it's better to send one clear email than 10 back-and-forths.
- Make sure the space is a collaborative environment—encourage makers to share and connect.
- Give all parties enough resources from day one.
- Allow enough time for experimentation—don't rush the creative process.
- Be upfront about finances—make sure everyone knows how the funding works.

## Why It's Worth It

At the end of the day, a residency isn't just about getting work done—it's about creating something meaningful that lasts. Makers leave with new ideas, new skills, and a deeper understanding of the world around them. The connections they make often become lifelong, and the lessons they learn go beyond just the project. A good residency isn't just a short-term project; it's the start of something bigger.

