



Re:Center Overview

Mission:

The goal of RE:CENTER is to facilitate region-specific, collaborative processes towards developing vital arts programs within Chicago Park District's fifteen cultural centers. The primary objective is for park staff, park patrons, local artists, community stakeholders and local organizations to work together to develop thoughtful and engaging strategies for increased public investment in our parks, and the greater neighborhoods where they reside. The secondary objectives are increased media and arts literacy, elevated levels of civic engagement on behalf of the arts, and fostering a deeper sense of community by way of increased visibility of, and investment in, local cultural touchstones.

Re:Center:

- Is community guided and community developed
- Bolsters the vibrant creative landscape of surrounding neighborhood
- Combines local and citywide resources, within and outside of the Cultural Center, to activate key areas of need
- Puts resources and time toward building a coalition of community members, artists, and park staff working, together and independently, as cultural stewards
- Supports stewardship through training, mentorship, modules, incentives, and guidance in successfully navigating the Chicago Park District's protocols and procedures
- Forges and nurtures a shared sense of space

The Four Phases of Re:Center

Participants undergo a 3-year process of mutual listening and co-creation as they reflect on and respond to the role of parks in local citizens' lives through four phases of gathering.

1. First comes ***the Listening Party***, a townhall-style talkback session aimed at getting both broadview and focused feedback around the park's role in local culture and everyday life.
2. The Listening Party is closely followed by ***the Meet Up***, where a typically much smaller group of ambitious and committed stakeholders convene to determine how to use additional resources and build on the desires and needs expressed at the Listening Party.
3. Through multiple Meet Up's, these culturally-focused committees collaboratively design ***the Feature***, an event funded in part by Re:Center and aimed at addressing the goals and needs that have remained at the forefront of the process.
4. Lastly, key figures in this process are invited to gather at a hosted event called ***Circulations***. Circulations is a time for reflection and celebration, to share in victories and lessons and see where we might support each other's work across neighborhoods.



Re:Center FAQ Sheet

What are expectations for getting involved?

Re:Center is extra work, no doubt about it. And with that, it requires time, effort and patience. But it comes with great rewards. We have designed this process to be a heavy lift in the beginning that will get lighter and lighter over the months and years to come. This is because greater relationships, partnerships, collaborations will be formed, coupled with an increased expertise in how to set goals and meet them within the particular framework of the Chicago Park District system, and the particular neighborhood context each park finds itself in.

How does this process use collaboration?

Re:Center attempts to offset the challenges of underfunded (or just plainly not funded) arts programming through collaboration. Collaboration is beautiful, but takes patience, effective communication, and a strong sense of empathy. While Re:Center presents one opportunity to get involved in the parks, there are others including signing up to be a volunteer, joining your local park advisory council, and learning about other ways for artists to get involved (e.g. Night Out in the Parks, Arts Partners in Residence, independent contractor opportunities).

What resources are available through this process?

Re:Center comes with two main resources: the Cultural Liaison who guides and supports the work and a bit of "seed money" to help catalyze initiatives designed by the cultural committees and park staff. The Cultural Liaison is a part-time Chicago Park District employee, who splits their time between 3 Cultural Centers that are engaged in different years of the Re:Center process. The Cultural Liaison's role is to advocate for the cultural stewards engaged in the Re:Center process, park supervisors and staff, and artists. Cultural Liaisons help cultural partners navigate the protocols of the Chicago Park District for successful events, assist with promotion and event production, facilitate and mediate meetings, and support visioning with administrative support, and networking within the broader ecosystem of Chicago's art and culture workers.

Where does this process get its funding?

Re:Center is a granted program. It has been supported by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Kraft Foundation, among others. The money that is brought with Re:Center to each park is temporary. Funding for future efforts, after Re:Center funds have been spent, will need to come from other sources though the Arts & Culture Unit will also be available to strategize and support other fundraising and/or grant writing opportunities. Park Advisory Councils and even cultural committees formed in the Re:Center process, have the unique ability to fundraise for programs, events, structural changes, materials, etc. in partnership with the Chicago Parks Foundation. It is the goal of Re:Center to equip those involved with the basic skills to continue this work themselves by helping people learn to achieve modest fundraising goals, as well as in-kind donation soliciting, for future events after the Re:Center process has finished.

What are our roles?

Key roles that are helpful in most projects are roles like: note taker, promoter, host/hospitality, site contact, park representative, community representative, artist or performer or presenter, teen or youth coordinator. There are many more possibilities here! Try to play to your strengths, share the work evenly, and ask for help when you need it.