



Igniting Change Through Culture: A Guide to Planning Your Cultural Week of Action

The **Cultural Week of Action (CWA)** is a powerful opportunity to harness the transformative energy of arts and culture to address pressing community challenges and build a more just, inclusive, and democratic society. This guide walks you through a step-by-step process to create a CWA event that is rooted in community, driven by collaboration, and designed for lasting impact.

1. Listen Deeply to Your Community: The Foundation of Impact

Every successful CWA event begins with a deep understanding of the community it serves. This means going beyond identifying problems—it's about uncovering the lived experiences, strengths, and aspirations that shape your community.

Ask the Right Questions

Cultural and Democratic Challenges

- What are the most pressing cultural or civic issues in your community?
- Are there threats to freedom of expression, historical erasure, or declining civic engagement?

Stories That Need to Be Told

- What narratives are missing from public discourse?

- What untold histories or ongoing struggles deserve a platform?

Sources of Joy and Connection

- What cultural practices or traditions bring people together?
- What gives your community a sense of belonging and hope?

Embrace Diverse Voices

True understanding comes from a mosaic of perspectives. Actively engage:

- **Youth** – for fresh ideas and future-forward thinking
- **Elders** – for wisdom and historical memory
- **Artists** – for creative expression and emotional resonance
- **Educators** – for insight into learning needs
- **Faith Leaders** – for moral guidance and community trust
- **Organizers & Activists** – for frontline perspectives and strategic insight

Build Bridges, Foster Solidarity

Move beyond surface-level engagement:

- **Bridge Divides** – Finding Common Ground Across Differences.
- **Build Solidarity** – Use shared cultural experiences to highlight collective struggles and aspirations.

Community-Led Cultural Responses (Examples)

Challenge	Cultural Response
Book bans and censorship	Host a public reading of banned books or a storytelling circle to affirm intellectual freedom.
Collective grief or trauma	Organize a community dance, drumming circle, or sing-along to foster healing and resilience.

2. Identify and Engage Collaborative Partners: Amplify Your Reach

No single person or group can fully represent a community's cultural richness. Strategic partnerships are essential for co-creating an event that is inclusive and impactful.

Think Beyond the Usual Suspects

Consider collaborating with:

- **Artists & Collectives** – for creativity and audience engagement
- **Local Businesses** – for venues, sponsorship, or promotion
- **Cultural Institutions** – for infrastructure and programming support
- **Grassroots Groups** – for authentic community connections
- **Civic Organizations** – for linking culture to civic action

Prioritize Inclusivity and Accessibility

Choose partners who can:

- **Reach Underrepresented Groups** – such as immigrant, LGBTQ+, disabled, or Indigenous communities
- **Ensure Accessibility** – through multilingual materials, ADA-compliant venues, and culturally relevant programming

3. Define Your Goals Together: Chart a Shared Course

Before diving into logistics, gather your team and partners to define your shared purpose. This ensures collective ownership and a unified vision.

Use the Community Needs–Goals Table

Community Need	CWA Event Idea	Potential Partners	Goals
Youth feel disconnected from civic life	Host a youth-led open mic on democracy and identity	Local schools, youth orgs, poets	Amplify youth voices and civic engagement
Rising disinformation in schools	Host a teach-in with educators and artists	Teachers' union, local library, DEI advocates	Counter disinformation and build narrative power

Tip: Use SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) to refine your objectives.

4. Plan Your Event Meticulously: From Vision to Reality

With your goals and partners in place, it's time to bring your vision to life.

Sample Planning Timeline (2-Month Lead Time)

Timeframe	Key Actions
Week 1–2	Define event goals, identify community needs, and begin outreach to potential partners.
Week 3–4	Confirm collaborators, secure venue(s), and begin drafting program content.
Week 5	Launch promotional campaign (social media, flyers, press outreach). Begin registration or ticketing if applicable.
Week 6	Finalize event schedule, confirm performers/speakers, and ensure accessibility plans are in place.
Week 7	Conduct rehearsals, tech checks, and finalize logistics (volunteers, signage, materials).
Week 8 (Event Week)	Execute the event with joy and intention. Document the experience through photos, video, and participant feedback.
Post-Event (Week 9)	Host a debrief session, share outcomes publicly, and thank all contributors and attendees.

Event Planning Checklist

- [] Is the event accessible (physically, linguistically, culturally)?
- [] Are all community voices represented?
- [] Is there a clear plan for promotion and outreach?
- [] Are there opportunities for feedback and reflection?
- [] Have you built in moments of joy, celebration, and connection?

5. COMMUNITY OUTREACH & COMMUNICATIONS

Spread the word and build excitement:

- 🎨 Create flyers, social media graphics, and email invites
- 📢 Post your event on the CWA map
- 📱 Use hashtags like **#CulturalWeekOfAction** and **#WeThePeople2025** during the event and the week of, so Race Forward can share your event widely
- 📷 Secure a photographer or videographer
- 🗣️ Share stories and photos after the event to inspire others

6. VIRTUAL EVENT TIPS

- Choose a platform that supports interaction
- Consider time zones and accessibility
- Use closed captioning and multilingual interpretation
- Do a tech run-through with all speakers
- Encourage live tweeting and chat engagement

7. KEEP THE MOMENTUM GOING

CWA is just the beginning. Consider:

- Hosting follow-up gatherings
- Creating a local cultural coalition
- Connecting your event to civic action (e.g., voter registration, town halls)

A Cultural Week of Action is more than an event—it's a movement. By centering community voices, building inclusive partnerships, and planning with intention, you can create a cultural experience that inspires, heals, and transforms.

Facilitating a Post-Webinar Discussion: Best Practices

Whether you're gathering in a living room, classroom, workplace, or community space, your role as a facilitator is to create a space for **reflection, connection, and courageous conversation**. Here's how to do it well:

Before the Discussion

1. Set the Tone

- Welcome everyone warmly.
- Share the purpose: *"We're here to reflect on the webinar and explore how culture can strengthen democracy and racial justice."*
- Emphasize values: respect, openness, curiosity, and confidentiality.

2. Prepare the Space

- Choose a quiet, comfortable setting.
- Arrange seating in a circle or semi-circle to encourage dialogue.
- Have materials ready: pens, paper, snacks, and the **Race Forward discussion guide** (if available).

During the Discussion

3. Start with a Check-In

- Invite each person to share their name and one word or feeling they're bringing into the space.
- Use a light prompt like: *"What resonated most from the webinar?"*

4. Use Open-Ended Questions

Guide the conversation with prompts like:

- *What stories or ideas stood out to you?*
- *How did the webinar challenge or affirm your understanding of democracy?*

- *What role does culture play in shaping our communities?*
- *What does solidarity look like in your life or work?*

5. Encourage All Voices

- Invite quieter participants to share, but don't pressure.
- Use phrases like: *"Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet."*
- Acknowledge contributions with gratitude.

6. Navigate Tension with Care

- If disagreement arises, affirm that it's okay.
- Use grounding phrases: *"Let's pause and reflect,"* or *"Can we explore that idea together?"*
- Return to shared values: dignity, listening, and truth.

After the Discussion

7. Reflect and Close

- Ask: *"What's one insight or action you're taking with you?"*
- Thank everyone for showing up and sharing.
- Invite participants to stay connected or plan a follow-up gathering.

8. Share Your Gathering

- Post your event on the **Cultural Week of Action map** to show solidarity.
- Share photos, quotes, or reflections (with consent) on social media using the event hashtag.

Facilitator Tips

- Be a guide, not a lecturer.
- Listen more than you speak.
- Stay flexible—follow the energy of the group.
- Celebrate joy, creativity, and connection.

