

# **COMMUNITY MURAL BEST PRACTICES**

Breakthrough Campaign

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## **STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS**

When starting the process of creating a community mural, it is important to lay the groundwork and establish a few things before the project really takes off.

### **DETERMINE YOUR SPACE**

Many businesses and organizations have walls they make available to muralists and community groups, but in some cases, you still need to confirm with city government, specifically zoning departments, that your planned mural is allowed, and does not conflict with zoning laws or other area businesses.

If the organization housing the mural is different from the organization creating the mural, it may be worth establishing a memo of understanding to lay out the intentions, timeline, and overall expectations for the mural. This might include expectations regarding upkeep, beginning and end date of production, etc.

### **ESTABLISH ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Designate 1-3 people to be project leads. These individuals will be responsible for coordinating paint days, gathering supplies, making sure everyone has the tools they need to safely execute the project, acting as press liaisons to interested parties, and ensuring the project remains on track. Your project leads should probably be folks who are okay with being the first to show up and last to leave.

### **PREPARE YOUR MURAL SPACE**

You'll want to give your wall a good scrub before you apply paint. That can be done with a power washer or just soap, a sponge, and a bucket of water. If your surface is moldy, consider adding bleach to your regime. Make sure your wall has some time to dry before applying paint. It may be helpful to keep in mind the surface of the wall you are planning to work on. If it has already been painted with a glossy, oil-based paint (this is highly unlikely, but still worth looking out for) you'll want to remove that so the water-based paint can adhere. If your mural is outdoors, painting when temperatures dip below 50 degrees is not recommended. The cold could keep your paint application from properly sealing, plus it makes your paint thicker and harder to control.

## **PREPARE YOUR MURAL DESIGN**

Take all the dimensions of your mural space and adjust your design to fit. To get your design from the page and onto the wall, we suggest utilizing a projector. This is one of the easiest ways to allow community members to participate while maintaining the integrity of the campaign artwork. Projectors can often be obtained through library lending programs or from schools. When projecting your artwork, keep in mind that your projector and light source will need to be at a certain height and angle for the image to be correct—which will likely require scaffolding or a ladder. Depending on the size of your wall, you may have to break the image you are projecting into a series of images, then piece them together as you move down the wall. Many artists prefer using a simple (thick tipped) Sharpie to trace the lines directly onto the wall. Every location is unique, but you may find it's easier to execute this portion of the project when sunlight isn't strong or even after night falls. Keep in mind you'll also need to find a power source for the projector. There are other methods to scaling up artwork, like through a grid system. [You can learn more about scaling techniques for murals here](#), and choose what works best for your specific project.

## **PAINT YOUR MURAL**

Time to paint! 84 Agency recommends using [Sherwin Williams Exterior Acrylic Latex SuperPaint](#). SuperPaint has a primer built in and is known as an affordable but quality paint for mural work. SuperPaint has a reputation of resisting peeling and fading, and has an average life expectancy of 5-7 years on a wall. The Breakthrough Campaign Guide has a color palette with HEX codes indicated for each color. Your local paint store can use these to suggest the best color matches.

We suggest a paint-by-numbers approach. First, assign a number to each color in your design. Then, mark those same numbers on your mural design on the wall. Make sure to use a medium that can be covered by your paint, like pencil, light or white paint, or a light-colored chalk.

After the mural is complete, a final protective varnish can be applied to protect it from general weathering and dirt. The varnish works as a sealant, and can be implemented in many ways. Although they're often quite expensive, and can be rubbery to apply, using an [anti-graffiti sealant](#) is advisable. Sherwin-Williams carries a good anti-graffiti sealant and is available in most locations. At the very least, [a basic concrete sealant](#) is recommended once your paint has adhered.



## **Safety Tips**

Providing your volunteers with bottled water is important—especially if your team is working in direct sunlight all day. Having sunscreen on hand is always recommended.

Young volunteers should not be allowed on ladders or scaffolding.

Encourage volunteers to wear paint clothes. If you're working with kids make sure guardians are aware of the project and have the opportunity to send paint clothes for their child.

## **SUPPLY LIST**

- A projector - this will allow you to project the outline of your design up on the wall
- Sharpies to draw the outline of your mural design
- Drop cloth to protect the ground below the mural
- Paint roller trays
- Paint roller tray liners (this could make for easy cleanup!)
- Paint rollers and extenders
- A variety of fine and wide brushes
- Painters tape to keep edges clean and defined
- Newspaper is always good to have on hand to soak up paint / lay brushes on
- Access to soap and water for hand washing and brush cleaning

## **ESTIMATED COST SHEET**

Sherwin Williams SuperPaint Semi-Gloss: \$56.00 per gallon

Sherwin Williams SuperPaint Flat: \$52.00 per gallon

If you plan to seal your mural as recommended, choose a flat paint finish. You will achieve the gloss look when the seal is applied.