

Request for Expressions of Interest – Shared Charitable Platform for the Arts Sector

Working collaboratively, Ontario Arts Council, Ontario Trillium Foundation, Toronto Arts Council, and the Metcalf Foundation have committed to move forward the significant discussion already occurring around the topic of shared charitable platforms in the arts sector. Our hope is to enable the establishment of a shared charitable platform pilot project by providing significant, multi-year support.

As a first stage in this process, the funding partners are releasing this **Request for Expressions of Interest**. Organizations and individuals in the arts who are interested in shared charitable platform work are invited to submit an Expression of Interest to attend a one-day workshop on Thursday, June 25th. This event will comprise part of the larger application process.

The June 25th session is intended:

- to further the conversation around shared charitable platforms,
- to help shape the process to apply for funding for both funders and potential applicants, and
- to incent some possible collaborative activities.

All interested parties must respond to this RFEIOI in order to be invited to the June 25th session. The next stage of the process will then be the release of a more extensive RFP, hopefully before the end of July, for full-fledged project proposals.

Background

The Canadian arts sector has experienced phenomenal growth over the past 25 years. Despite the positive benefits of this expansion, one of the consequences is that there are not enough resources in traditional arts funding systems to keep up with the growth in fully independent, charitable, non-profit organizations established to support the work of individual artists and small collectives. Many now question the feasibility of requiring artists to incorporate as stand-alone organizations in order to receive public and private funding, and seek alternative models to sustain their practice. One of the alternatives that has been proposed to address this challenge is shared charitable platforms.

As Jane Marsland writes in *Shared Platforms and Charitable Venture Organizations*, her 2013 Metcalf Innovation paper, emerging artists face pressure to incorporate and to obtain charitable status as they enter the highly competitive funding systems.

Once incorporated, they have to support organizational, administrative, and financial systems in order to comply with legal requirements, find and develop a board of directors, and then find time to create their artistic works. Artists end up under tremendous pressure to secure annual operating funding, as it is currently the only way they believe they can sustain the organizational structure that's required once they incorporate. ...

Artists need a way to obtain the resources they require to create, produce, and connect their work to an audience efficiently and economically. In particular, they need a mechanism to help them develop and support more diverse revenue sources than simply project grants from public arts funding agencies. This mechanism is the concept behind shared platforms.

Timeline

RFEOI issued	May 4
Deadline to respond to RFEOI	May 26
Invitations issued to information session	June 12
Day-long information session	June 25
Release of RFP for full funding opportunity	mid/late July
Deadline to submit RFPs	mid September
Funding decision regarding shared charitable platform pilot	late fall

RFEOI Eligibility

Expressions of interest are welcome from a variety of sources, including, but not limited to: established charities considering ways in which they could expand or change their existing activities to function as a shared charitable platform for the arts; incorporated non-profits who would seek charitable registration as part of their proposal; or individual entrepreneurs proposing to create a new shared charitable platform in the arts sector.

The funders will look favourably on applicants whose proposals could provide support for a wide group of artists and/or artistic projects.

Please note additional eligibility criteria, including geographic restrictions and criteria that favour established legal entities, may be added when the funders are considering final applications for funding. In order for the pilot project to be funded by Toronto Arts Council, it must be based in Toronto; in order for the pilot project to be funded by Ontario Arts Council and Ontario Trillium Foundation, it must be based in Ontario. It is hoped that the pilot project, however, will have the capacity to operate nationally.

The funders are interested **only** in proposals regarding **shared charitable platforms**, as opposed to traditional shared platforms. The term “shared platform” is being used to refer to any organization or individual that provides administrative, human resource, or financial services for a number of independent projects. By contrast, a “shared charitable platform” refers specifically to a **registered charity** that, in addition to providing the management services detailed above, is also able to provide charitable receipts for the independent projects on the platform. There are significant legal responsibilities for shared charitable platforms, which must have legal control over and responsibility for the projects that they support.

RFEOI Submissions

Expressions of interest are to be a **maximum of three pages in length**. They should include the name of the applicant (organization and/or individual), with names, titles (as applicable), and contact information for all individuals who are proposing to attend the session on Thursday, June 25th.

In addition, expressions of interest should provide responses to the following questions.

- Why are you well-placed to serve as a shared charitable platform?
- What steps, if any, have you already taken towards functioning as a shared charitable platform?

- What community or client base would you propose to serve as a shared charitable platform?
- What is your current legal status (registered charity, incorporated non-profit, individual, or other)? If you are a registered charity or an incorporated non-profit, would your current articles of incorporation and/or charitable objects allow you to act as a shared charitable platform?

Expressions of interest are to be submitted in pdf form to mjones@metcalffoundation.com **prior to 5:00 pm on Tuesday, May 26th**. For additional information, please contact Michael Jones, Performing Arts Program Director at the Metcalf Foundation, 416-926-0366 x 225.

Funding Partners

Ontario Arts Council

For more than 50 years, Ontario Arts Council (OAC) has provided vital support to the professional arts community in Ontario. Since 1963, OAC's mandate has been to foster the creation and production of art for the benefit of all Ontarians. OAC is financed through an annual grant from the Ontario government's Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport and has more than 75 programs to support the arts. In 2013-14, OAC funded 1,737 individual artists and 1,095 organizations for a total of \$52.1 million. These grants benefitted artists and arts organizations in 223 communities across Ontario.

Ontario Trillium Foundation

The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) is an agency of the Government of Ontario and Canada's largest granting foundation. Over \$110 million is awarded annually to some 1,300 non-profit and charitable organizations across the province. Each year, more than 3,000 applications are reviewed by hundreds of volunteers. Supported by professional and experienced staff, volunteers bring knowledge of local needs and a wide range of expertise to the decision-making process. OTF celebrated 30 years as a grant-maker in 2013. In 2015, OTF is launching a new evidence-based investment strategy to define its mission of building healthy and vibrant communities. OTF has reiterated its commitment to investing in arts, culture and heritage because they have intrinsic value, allow people to participate in creative activity, foster intercultural understanding and a shared sense of belonging.

Toronto Arts Council

Founded in 1974 as an arm's-length body of the City of Toronto, Toronto Arts Council (TAC) is committed to artistic excellence, innovation, and accessibility throughout every neighbourhood of Toronto. Through its grant programs, TAC supports a wide spectrum of artistic endeavour that makes the City of Toronto one of the leading cultural centres in Canada. TAC supports a broad cross-section of arts practice, reflecting the diversity of artists, arts communities, and audiences that it serves.

Metcalf Foundation

The goal of the George Cedric Metcalf Charitable Foundation is to enhance the effectiveness of people and organizations working together to help Canadians imagine and build a just, healthy, and creative society. We advance innovative approaches to sustainability, equity, and creativity. Through Metcalf's Performing Arts Program, we support organizations and the people who work in them as they explore strategies for addressing longstanding sectoral issues in meaningful new ways.